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YOUNG CONVERTS;

OR,

Beginners in Zion's Ways.

BY ROBERT BOYD, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF "NONE BUT CHRIST;" "GLAD TIDINGS;" AND "FOOD FOR
THE LAMBS."

"As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the
sons of God."—JOHN.

"So run that ye may obtain."—PAUL.

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I.

A GOOD BEGINNING.

TAKE it for granted that my reader is really a converted soul. That, casting from you all other dependence, you now rest peacefully upon the atoning work of Christ, and that your faith in him has wrought by love and purified your heart. I ask not *how* this great change has been brought about, nor what has been the direct agency that the Holy Spirit has blessed to bring you to Jesus. Whether you have passed through a long process of convictions, of alternate fears and hopes; or whether, like most of the

conversions mentioned in the New Testament, you were suddenly brought to submit yourself to Christ's method of salvation, is now of no great consequence. You are now *in* Christ, and that is the really vital point. The great matter upon which two eternities turn—upon which life and death, heaven and hell depend—your personal faith in Christ, is now settled, and well settled ; and I thank God on your behalf.

Dear Reader, I congratulate you on the high honor, the lofty distinction, to which the mighty grace of God has lifted you. The greatest gift that God can bestow upon a creature is himself. You are now an heir of God. You are able to say with holy boldness, "The Beloved is mine, and I am His." The Apostle John said to the converts of his day, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God ;" and we may rest assured that the unchanging Saviour has not abridged the honors and privileges of his people since that time. Once in Christ by a living faith, and the whole fulness of God is yours. Your feelings and frames

are nothing ; ceremonies, and notions, and creeds, and ordinances, and formal participation in worship, are all nothing without Christ ; but with trust in him, there is not any height of glory and honor in the whole universe to which a creature can attain, to which you may not ascend. If you have faith in Jesus, then you are a new creature ; if a new creature, then you are a son of God ; if a son of God, then you are "an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ." Thus united to Jesus, your inheritance is sure, for he is now in full possession of it.

You see, then, what a great thing it is to be a Christian. Indeed it will take all eternity to unfold to us the greatness of the privilege ; and at present we can only wander around the edge of the boundless subject and exclaim, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." As Rowland Hill once said, when striving to illustrate God's love to his people, "I am unable to reach the lofty theme ! yet I do not think that the smallest fish that swims in the boundless ocean ever complains of the immeasur-

able vastness of the deep. So it is with me: I can plunge, with my puny capacity, into a subject, the immensity of which I shall never be able fully to comprehend!" For a child of wrath, a slave of Satan, a condemned criminal, an heir of hell, to be raised to a height of privilege and glory to which even angels do not attain, is most wonderful to the thoughtful mind! And that you, who, but a few days ago, were full of enmity against God, your heart set in you to do evil, your footsteps hastening down the broad road to destruction, should now be what you are, and where you are, is a miracle of grace. No wonder that the holy angels rejoiced over you in the happy hour of your espousals to Christ. No wonder that the friends who had so long prayed and longed for your conversion, rejoiced over you with such a solemn gladness. And no wonder that you yourself rejoiced "with a joy unspeakable and full of glory."

And now that you are a Christian, it becomes a most important question, *What kind of a Christian are you going to be?*

Are you going to be one modeled after men's opinions, or after the Bible standard? Men have a way of turning aside the point of Divine truth on this subject from their consciences, by saying, Christians *ought* to do so and so; but the Word of God does not speak in this way. It does not say that Christians *ought* to be the light of the world, but that they *are* so. It does not say that they *ought* to be holy, but that they *are* possessed of that character. It is not merely that they *ought* to be bold and faithful witnesses for Christ in this dark and sinful world, but that they really *are* so testifying. That is a solemn passage, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." (1 Cor. iii. 11-13). Here is a good foundation, a most precious foundation, the best that even

God could lay, firm and secure as his eternal throne—but what are you going to build upon it? Shall it be the wood, hay, and stubble of worldly-mindedness, carnal affections, vile tempers, and low, narrow, selfish views? Or shall it be the gold, or silver, and precious stones of holiness, self-denial, heavenly affections and earnest love to God and man, showing itself in works of faith and in labors of love? Depend upon it that day by day, and little by little, you are building up some kind of character, and it becomes you to see well to it, that it is such as will honor the glorious foundation, and such as the fires of judgment will not have to burn up.

The temple of a holy life, built upon the foundation laid in Zion, greatly honors God, and commands the admiration of even bad men. The following fact, related by one familiar with all the circumstances, will illustrate this: “In one of the older States resided an infidel, the owner of a saw-mill, situated by the side of the highway over which a large portion of a Christian con-

gregation passed every Sabbath to and from the church. This infidel, having no regard for the Sabbath, was as busy, and his mill was as noisy on that holy day as any other. Before long it was observed, however, that a certain time before service the mill would stop, remain silent, and appear to be deserted for a few moments, when its noise and clatter would re-commence, and continue till about the close of the service, when for a short time it again ceased. It was soon noticed that one of the deacons of the church passed the mill to the place of worship during the silent interval, and so punctual was he to the hour that the infidel knew when to stop his mill, so that it should be silent when the deacon was passing, although he paid no regard to the passing of others. On being asked why he paid this mark of respect to the deacon, he replied, "The deacon professes just what the rest of you do ; but he *lives*, also, such a life, that it makes me feel bad *here* (putting his hand upon his heart) to run my mill while he is passing."

Now, it is undeniable that there are large numbers, who, after their professed conversion, drop out of sight, and you would never know that they were Christians, unless they told you so; or you found their names upon the church book. It is true, every Christian cannot occupy a prominent and commanding position in the work of Christ's kingdom, but every one can be a *worker* for Jesus, and can boldly unfurl his colors, and let it be known whose side he is on.

A minister was once asked to make a speech at the anniversary of one of our great benevolent societies. When he got upon the platform he looked around for the friend who invited him, supposing him to be the president of the society. At length he saw him in an obscure corner of the crowded house; and when the meeting was over he came forth with a glad countenance, thanking one and another for their efforts, and expressing great delight at the prosperity of the cause.

“But,” said the speaker referred to, “I

thought you were the president of the society ? ”

“ O, no, I am not,” he replied, with great modesty.

“ Then, you are one of the vice-presidents, surely ? ” said the speaker.

“ No, I am not.”

“ Are you the secretary then, or the treasurer ? ”

“ No, neither of these.”

“ Then, what are you ? What office do you fill in the board ? ”

“ None, sir ; I have no office, and never had, unless, if you choose, you may call me the pack-horse of the enterprise ! ”

What a rebuke was the conduct of this noble man to those who will do nothing, unless they can do some great thing ; who will take no position, unless they can take some great and commanding position ! They must be made prominent workers, centering in themselves the attention of all, or they will do no work at all. This good man cared not what post of duty he was appointed to, nor how humble the work as-

signed him ; he did it heartily as unto the Lord and not unto man. Resolve in your heart that you will be a *laborer*, not a *loiterer*, in the Lord's vineyard ; that whether your life is to be a long one, or very short, as men use the term, it shall be filled with Christian activity. A life is not to be numbered by years, but by what a man has done for God. McCheyne, Summerfield, Nott, and Dudley Tyng, all died young, and yet they were old in fruits unto holiness—their life's work done and well done. Let yours, like theirs, be a life in earnest, a life that shows, not religion as *something* among other things, but as absolutely *everything*. Let yours be a consecrated life ; soul, body and spirit—your time, talents, and property, all wholly dedicated to God.

Let me warn you of one thing—as you have begun by finding peace in Christ, continue to seek it there. Many young converts make great mistakes here. At first, their feelings and affections have been warm and gushing. In the fire and fervency of their first love they feel as if they

could sing all the day long ; and when these glowing feelings, from whatever cause, begin to decline, they sink into despondency, and feel as if they had lost their religion. But religion is a thing of principle, not of mere feeling. Your religion does not consist of your feelings ; it consists of your faith in Jesus, and your readiness to be governed in all things by his will. Frames and feelings change with the state of our health, the state of the weather, the circumstances in which we are placed, and through a great variety of moral and physical causes ; but Jesus Christ changes never. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

We have known some who never thought they had any enjoyment of religion, unless they were in the midst of a high excitement. The meeting that did not melt them into tears, or lift them up to the heights of ecstatic rapture, was not a good meeting. The calm statement of Divine truth, the earnest study of the Bible to know the will of God, the prayerfulness

and the self-examination of the closet, all seem to them dull and uninteresting. They are like a habitual reader of exciting and sensational novels; they have no relish for what is solid and instructive. My dear reader, avoid this at the very beginning of your Christian career, and let Jesus alone, who is the Author, be the Finisher of your faith.

II.

MAKING A PUBLIC PROFESSION.

HERE is not a nobler sight in the world than to see a man commit himself unreservedly to the best of causes—the cause of Christ; determined to stand by it at all hazards; to live for it, to work for it, to suffer for it, and, if need be, to die for it; but never to forsake it. Such a sight is morally sublime, and challenges the admiration of all who are capable of appreciating moral beauty. Said David, “I will pay my vows unto the Lord *now*, in the presence of all his people.”

SOON as a soul is converted, it becomes immediately an imperative duty to make a

public profession of attachment to the Lord Jesus. Some churches are in the habit of keeping young converts back for a time, to prove their sincerity and their firmness. As a pastor, I have formerly, to some extent, encouraged this practice, in some cases; and I am now sorry for it. It has not a shadow of support in the Word of God. When Christ sent forth his disciples clothed with his high commission to preach the Gospel, and to establish churches, the promised Spirit accompanied the word spoken by them, and in some cases thousands were converted, and on the same day, often in the same hour, were baptized and added to the church. To put a tender little lamb out on a snow-bank, exposed to the bleak winds, to see whether it will live, is entirely a modern invention. The primitive churches were never guilty of such folly. They required a profession of conversion, of repentance towards God, and of faith in the Lord Jesus; and where this was given, and there was nothing in the life of the candidate to contradict the pro-

fession, they were at once baptized and added to the church. It is true they were sometimes deceived, and admitted unworthy persons, just as churches are deceived now; but that belongs to the imperfection of human nature, and is an evil that no amount of delay in the reception of members will either mitigate or prevent. It is your duty as a Christian at once to offer yourself to the Church of Christ, and if they throw any delay in your way, the the responsibility is theirs, not yours.

But you may say, "Can I not be as good a Christian without belonging to a church as with it?" To this I can give a most decided answer in the negative. No; you cannot. Indeed the question itself is absurd. It is equivalent to asking, "Cannot I be as good a Christian without obeying Christ as with it?" Christ established his church upon earth. He purchased her with his own blood. He laid the foundation upon which she is built with his own bleeding hands. He has appointed her ordinances and her government; established

her officers, and given them their gifts and qualifications for her special edification. He has watched over her in all ages, and has pledged his princely word that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against her;” and now, do you think that it can be agreeable to the Saviour’s will to see his church neglected by his professed followers? No. To live out of the Church of Christ is to live in sin, in constant disobedience, and this must bring condemnation and darkness upon the mind. The church is the Christian’s home, while upon earth. There he is supported and comforted, and fitted for the society of the just made perfect, the church of the first-born, written in Heaven. Though the church here is perfect in her Great Head, she is not perfect in her members. They have their imperfections, and evil tempers; jangling and contention sometimes mar her holy beauty; but her most pious members can say, “Oh! Zion, with all thy faults I love thee still!”

“ Beyond my highest joy,
I prize her heavenly ways ;
Her sweet communion, solemn vows,
Her hymns of love and praise.”

“ For her my tears shall fall ;
For her my prayers ascend ;
To her my cares and toils be given,
Till toils and cares shall end.”

For those who try to be Christians without joining the church, there is another consideration worthy of attention. If it is right for you to remain out of the church, it is right for another to do it ; and if it is right for two to do it, it would be right for two thousand, or for all Christians to do it. Thus, on the principle mentioned, there would be no churches, no places of worship, no ministers of the Gospel, no bond of union to bind Christians together, no organization by which the body of the faithful could work together for the overthrow of evil, and the establishment of good in the world. Would this be a desirable state of things ? You feel that it would not, and yet as far as your influence goes on this point it leads to just such results. Our

Lord says, "He that is not with me is against me," and the same is true concerning his church. If you are not with it, you are counted against it, at least to a certain extent. The world will point to you as one who has something against the church, or else you would have cast in your lot with her ; and the better your character and reputation, the greater damage your standing aloof will do. The scoffers will say that you are too good a man to have anything to do with such people. They will count you on their side.

But there are some young converts who are kept back by conscientious, though mistaken views, in regard to themselves. One says, "I feel utterly unworthy to belong to Christ's Church." Now, this self-distrust is a good thing when kept in its proper place. True faith in Jesus always has connected with it self-distrust, for before we can depend entirely on him, we must be emptied of self. It has been compared to a young tree ; the trunk goes upward from the little seed, and the root

goes downward from the same seed ; growing and springing in different directions from the same source. So from the same seed of faith in Christ, springs upwards confidence toward God, and downwards distrust in ourselves. But if this distrust is used to lead us to neglect Christ's plain commands, it is prostituted to a bad object. It is turning the grace of God into sin. Christ does not ask you to make a public profession of your faith because you are worthy. It was not because you were worthy that he pardoned your sins, and shed his love abroad in your heart ; and he asks you now to show your love to him by keeping his commands, and doing those things that will be pleasing in his sight from a principle of right.

There are others who say, "I am afraid to make a public profession, lest I should fall away and dishonor it." This sounds very humble, but it really springs from pride of heart. It goes upon the principle that you are to be your own support and to stand without Divine support. Did God

make you a Christian, or did you make yourself one? And if he made you a Christian, do you not think that he is able to keep you one? "O, thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?" He who gives the strength to do one duty, can support in the discharge of another. Go on, boldly, and in the path of right you have nothing to fear. The Master you serve will surround you with invisible armor, so that none can do you hurt. The promises of God will stand up around you like the mountains around Jerusalem.

This reminds me of an incident which occurred on board a British ship at the battle of the Nile. The narrator says: "There was but one Bible among seven hundred men. This was owned by a pious sailor, who did not forget to let its light shine before men. He read it over to others, and at length, by its means, a little praying circle was formed, numbering thirteen in all. Just before the engagement they all met, and commended themselves to God in prayer, expecting never again to meet in

this world. Their ship was in the thickest of the storm, and all around their comrades fell, never to rise again. At one gun, where two of the number were stationed, three other soldiers were killed by one ball, but there they stood firm to their posts, clad in an armor invisible to mortal eyes, but more impregnable than steel. When the battle was over, those who were left had agreed to meet if possible. What was their joy to find the whole thirteen assembled, not one of them even wounded. What a thanksgiving meeting that must have been!"

Now, my reader, the same God who preserved these men from physical danger, can keep you from all moral danger; so that in the severest temptations, when the fiery darts of the enemy fall thick around you, the Divine shield will defend you, and you will stand "steadfast and immovable."

Sometimes persons are kept back from making a public profession of their faith by the fear of man. They fear the displeasure of their ungodly relations, or the sneers of their former companions, or friends. They

dread, too, to appear before the great congregation and testify to what Christ has done for their souls. This is very unworthy of those for whose salvation the blessed Saviour "endured the Cross and despised the shame." That gracious Friend tells us, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily." We must often sacrifice the less that we may enjoy the greater. We must often pass by the favor of men and the smiles of the world, in order that we may have the favor of God, and the happiness of a good conscience. These are the plain and searching principles that Jesus lays down, and we can see that they are highly reasonable and proper. If any are disposed to shrink back from them, it must be because they prefer the favor of men to that of God, or because they are ashamed of the Lord Jesus. "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels."

You must come out from this halting, hesitating, compromising spirit, or you can never be a happy and a useful Christian. Your mind will be tossed to and fro by conflicting influences, and you will grope about, wrapped up in a dark and gloomy haze of doubt and of uncertainty. Suppose, when Paul was converted that he had tried to keep it all to himself in order to avoid persecution, what would his religion ever have amounted to? Or if Luther, when he discovered in his Bible the doctrine of justification by faith, had kept it all in his own heart, and in his cell, lest he should get involved in some trouble, would God ever have honored him as he did? No; the principle that God acts on in such matters is, "Them that honor me, I will honor."

Perhaps my reader has some difficulty about the denomination of Christians with which to identify himself. This is a matter of importance, and demands the prayerful and careful study of the Word of God. You should not join a church because your friends or companions are going to join it,

or have already done so. It is no good reason for joining a church that you think you would *feel more at home* there. It should not be a matter of mere feeling, but of intelligent principle, what church you shall join. The Bible is the only standard of appeal in all matters of faith and practice; and after an honest and faithful examination of that holy book, you should join that body of Christians which you conscientiously believe to be nearest to that Divine rule.

I believe that the church to which I belong comes nearer to the faith and practice of the church established by Christ and his Apostles than any other that I know of. If I did not so believe, it would be my duty to leave it. If I knew of any other nearer to the Bible, it would be my duty to join it. Every intelligent and conscientious Christian, it is to be presumed, acts on the same principle. A sham liberality would no doubt call this bigotry; but those who have learned to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," are not

easily frightened by big-swelling words of vanity. On this matter let the Word of God be your only guide.

But though I do not feel at liberty to counsel you as to your denominational relations, I do most earnestly entreat you to place yourself under a faithful and evangelical ministry. Attend the ministry of no man who does not preach Christ, in the fullest sense of the word. Christ may be in his creed, but if he is not in his sermons your soul will starve under him. Mr. Spurgeon tells us that when he was awakened, he wandered from church to church to find out how he could be saved, but could not hear the Gospel. One minister preached the experience of the people of God, and he felt that he had nothing to do with that; and another told him of the blessedness of the regenerated, and he felt that that did not apply to him; on one Sabbath the text would be "Be not deceived, God is not mocked;" and again, "The wages of sin is death." He tells us that he became worse and worse after hearing discourses

that nearly drove him to despair; and then would come the text for good people, but not a word for him.

At last he went to hear a very humble preacher, but his text was, "Look unto me and be saved all ye ends of the earth." That was what he wanted to hear. He felt that it was intended for him. "Look, look," said the preacher, "to Jesus, and you shall be saved this moment, you shall be lightened of your burden." Spurgeon tells us that he did, then and there, look to Jesus by faith, and he felt as if he could have sprung into the air, for his burden of sin was gone.

A minister may preach ably and eloquently; he may be a good man, and preach a great deal of valuable truth; he may even preach a great deal *about* Christ, and yet not preach Christ in the scripture sense of the term. Place yourself under the instruction of one who will delight frequently to lead you around the cross.

- “Oppressed with noon-day’s scorching heat,
 To yonder cross I flee ;
 Beneath its shelter take my seat ;
 No shade like this for me !
- “Beneath that cross clear waters burst,
 A fountain sparkling free ;
 And there I quench my desert thirst ;
 No spring like this for me !
- “For burdened ones a resting-place,
 Beside that cross I see ;
 Here I cast off my weariness ;
 No rest like this for me !”

III.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

MUCH is said in the present day about human progress. In praise of it, poetry and eloquence have taken their loftiest flights. Ours has so often been called a progressive age, and we have so often been called a progressive people, that with all our vanity we are beginning to tire of the endless repetition. Progress is doubtless a good thing, if it only be of the right kind. Many suppose that by repudiating what is *old*, and eagerly adopting what is *new*, they are making progress. Change, however, is one thing,

and true progress is another. All true progress, such as is pleasing to God, must come from within, not from without. The eagle might have wings tied upon it, but it could never make any progress with them; it must have wings that grow up out of its own body with which to soar up to its favorite peak on the sky-piercing mountain. All true human progress must begin in the heart, and it must be put there by His hand who plants the glorious galaxy of stars upon the dark brow of night.

We all know that the body, under the influence of proper food, air, and exercise, is capable of growth in strength, and in the development of all its powers. The same law of growth holds good in regard to the deathless soul. That was a remarkable wish of the Apostle John for his beloved friend Gaius: "I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper, and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." Alas! if the measure of our physical health were to be regulated by the health of the soul, what a nation of invalids we would be. How

many there are who are sensitively alive to the wants of their bodies, but utterly neglectful of the immortal part lodged within! Many a large, sturdy, vigorous body, covers a poor, weak, sickly, starved soul; so that the disproportion between the soul and its outward covering, is as great as would be a very small boy clothed in his father's garments.

There can be no growth without life. Dead things do not grow, but decay. You might ornament a dead tree to any extent; you might paint and varnish over the dead, rotten trunk; but unless you could put life there, there could be no growth. Nay, in spite of all your ornamenting, the process of decay would go on; and one dead limb after another would fall down, fit only for the fire. And so there can be no spiritual growth unless we are connected with Jesus by a living faith. He says, "I am the life." The branch to get life and strength from the vine, must be in the vine, not merely *near* it. It might be tied against the vine, but it would get no strength, and

bear no fruit, but hang there an unsightly object, rustling in the winds of heaven. Thus a man may be connected with a church by an outward profession, and may remain so connected for many years ; but if there is not a union with Christ there can be no spiritual growth, and no bringing forth of fruit unto holiness.

The Ottawa river, in Canada, at certain seasons of the year, rises to a great height, and then suddenly falls again, leaving logs on the high banks, and dead branches and other rubbish hanging in the tops of the trees. There they lie, useless things, rotting in the sun and the rain that are making other things grow. I have often looked sadly upon them, and thought how like those Christless professors, who in some wild flood of excitement have been swept into the church, and when the excitement has gone down, are left there with no spiritual life !

They may be moral, and amiable, and never do any outward act of public sin for which they can be cast out of the church ;

but they are spiritually dead. They may hold an orthodox creed; they may sing and pray, and go through religious duties with mechanical regularity; but as there is no Christ in their religion, there is no life. Sometimes, on great occasions, they may put on the semblance of life, just as a corpse may by galvanism be made to roll its eyes, and toss wildly its lifeless limbs; but it is only a spasmodic exertion that soon settles down into the stillness and corruption of death. Ah! how sad it is to look upon these moral automatons, these types of the old Pharisee, and to think of how few of them are even likely to be saved. Oh! that the Divine Spirit might give efficacy to the appeal, "Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

Where there is true union with Christ, there will not only be life, but growing life. "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it *more abundantly*." But our eye must be fixed singly upon Christ, and our whole hope centred in him.

He alone must be our strength. We must not be looking partly at ourselves and partly at Christ; now glancing at our own feelings as a ground of hope, and then at his merits.

It is no uncommon thing for young converts to make great mistakes here. Deeply conscientious, they dread deceiving themselves; and fervently desirous of growing in grace, they watch and analyze every feeling and emotion of their minds. In the meantime, while thus engaged, their attention is turned away from Jesus, the great source of all spiritual life and growth; and thus they find themselves plunged into a dark jungle of doubts and fears. We have seen children, in their great anxiety for the growth of their little gardens, keep pulling up their plants every now and again to see if they were growing. The farmer who would pull up his corn to measure if it was growing, would not have much of a crop in the fall; and that Christian who turns away his eyes from the Saviour to analyze his own experience, and

who is constantly putting every motive, feeling, and emotion, on the rack, to make it speak something good concerning himself, will find that, instead of growth and strength, leanness has come into his soul.

My dear reader, if you keep a constant nearness to Christ, taking him as your only hope, and his spotless life as your bright example, there will be seen in your life a spiritual progress, brighter and brighter to the perfect day. With knowledge in your mind, grace in your heart, and obedience in your life, there will be such a symmetry of character, as will lead men to glorify your Father in heaven. In the hard conflict with your besetting sins, Christ will be your strength; nor will he leave you till your last foe lies vanquished on the field. Rash and impetuous passions will be displaced by calm and holy repose in God. Unholy bursts of imperious temper will be subdued by the meekness of Jesus. Peevish impatience will give way to holy submission to God's holy will. Worldly-mindedness will be overcome by

communion with God, and a clearer conception of the grandeur and glory of eternal things.

Remember that all growth is gradual. It is not shooting up into a great and holy man in an hour, or in some moment of strong religious excitement, or of hallowed association. The soul, on such occasions, may receive a heavenly impetus that will greatly increase its strength ; but its real growth will be a progressive work, day by day. In the morning let the thought fill your mind, " My life is made up of days, and as the great business of life is to live to the glory of God, how can I best glorify Him to-day ? " Seek earnestly to live to God for that one day, as if it were your last. However pressing your duties, be sure that you get time for two things—speaking to God, and hearing God speak to you. By speaking to God, I mean prayer, and by hearing God speak to you, I mean reading the Bible.

It is said of Col. Gardiner, that when in his campaigns he had to march before day-

break, he always made a point of rising early enough to have time for prayer and reading the Scriptures. Instead of making your religion bend to your worldly convenience, make your worldly convenience bend to your religion. Pray earnestly and believingly for growth in grace, and for strength to support you amid the trials and temptations of life; but do not put prayer in the place of duties which you ought to do yourself. God says you are to *watch* as well as pray. Suppose you pray that God would give you the victory over some besetting sin, and that you neglect to watch against that sin, and to cut off every temptation to its indulgence, as far as you can, you cannot expect God to answer your prayer. God will do nothing for us that we can do for ourselves. Prayer is not intended to encourage indolence. When we pray for deliverance from evil, and victory over our sins, we must watch, and fight, and struggle against them, or else our prayer is only a solemn mockery. God brought

it as a very heavy charge against Israel that "they would not frame their doings to turn unto their God." We must be co-workers with God in the great work of growing in grace. We must shun the appearance of evil, and not even *seem* to come short.

And it is of vital importance that we have daily communion with God through his Word. This is to be our daily bread—bread for the soul. "Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that cometh out of the mouth of God." You would not expect a child to grow physically, unless it were regularly to eat nourishing food; and a child of God cannot grow in grace, unless he lives upon the food which God has provided. Read, therefore, a portion of the Scriptures every morning, before going out into the bustle of the world. Our Lord's prayer was, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." If, then, you are to be sanctified in soul, it must be through the truths of the word of God; and, therefore, let your mind be deeply im-

bued with them. It is a condition of your nature that you will grow in something, and if not in good it will be in evil. There can be no standing still with an immortal soul. The soul craves for food, and if it is not fed and nourished by the pure words of God, it will betake itself to vile and worldly husks.

My dear reader, resolve to press forward to higher attainments in the Divine life. Be not contented with a low standard of piety—with merely being safe. Your example is a very high one, the Lord Jesus. Keep your eye fixed upon him, till you are transformed into his image. An eloquent writer says : “The growth in grace is the only one not subject to decay and death. It has a vast assimilative power which *nothing* can resist. It feeds, therefore, on all the elements of man’s life, on all the chequered experiences of his days. It feeds on joy ; it feeds on sorrow. It rises by nature’s growths, but does *not* sink in nature’s decays. The outward man may perish, but the inward man is renewed day by day.

Days of sorest sickness fill the springs of immortal health; and the day of death in the vocabulary of grace is but the earthly name for the first day of eternal life. Grow, then, in that which must forever grow—in that which will always be grace, although it will soon be glory, and always fresh and living as the beauty of the Saviour, or as the thoughts and affections of God.”

“ My hopes are passing upward, onward,
And with my hopes my heart has gone,
My eye is turning skyward, sunward,
Where glory brightens round yon throne.”

IV.

EVIDENCES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

IT MAY be profitable to point out a few of the evidences of growth in the Divine life.

One of the most prominent is entire submission to the will of God. All sin is founded on opposition to "the good, and perfect, and holy will of God," and all holiness is founded on a sinking of our own will into his. To accomplish the work of spritual growth in the soul, God often uses the rod of affliction, as well as the privileges of his grace ; and just as the chilling

winds of autumn help to ripen the corn, as well as the warm sun of the summer; so it is a rare thing to meet a highly spiritual Christian who has not been taught in the school of affliction. There are some plants that only emit their sweetest odors when pressed, and many a saint, in his increased ripeness of character, is heard exclaiming, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

It is a decided mark of grace advancing in the soul, therefore, when, amid the pressure of outward trials, we can obey the Divine command, "Be still, and know that I am God." What an exceedingly interesting and touching illustration of this spirit is found in the case of the Shunamite woman. Her home, lately made so happy by the presence of one of God's choicest gifts, a lovely child, is now darkened with a terrible sorrow; for the loved one has been suddenly taken away by death. She and her husband had lived long together before their home echoed the voice of childhood's happy prattle; and now, as their affections begin to cling around the dear

boy with unspeakable love, his young life fades away. Proudly and joyfully had they but lately gazed upon his intelligent face, and thought what a comfort and prop he would be to their declining years. But, alas! with many a fond parent they are now compelled to say through their tears:

“ One little bud adorned my bower,
And shed sweet fragrance round,
It grew in beauty hour by hour,
Till, ah! the spoiler came in power
And crushed it to the ground.”

Apparently in his usual health, the dear boy left his fond mother in the morning, to mingle with the reapers in his father's fields, and by noon of the same day, that mother looks in the bitterness of her anguish upon his pale face, on which death has just stamped his seal. How does she deport herself under this crushing trial? Does she give way to that wild and clamorous grief that murmurs against God and his ways? No, she hastens to Mount Carmel to tell her sorrow to the man of God, and when he asks her, “Is it well

with the child?" She answered, "It is WELL."

What a lovely state of mind! Sweetly meek and submissive, under one of the most crushing sorrows that a fond mother can be called to bear, she looks up through her tears into the face of her Heavenly Father, and says, "It is well." She dreads to return to her home, for its chief joy has gone out in darkness, but *it is well*. That bright eye which always met the kindred glance of her own love, is closed in death, but *it is well*. Silent now is the tongue that spoke to her such loving words, and cold now are the lips that kissed her so fondly, but *it is well*. O, woman, great is thy faith! From thy bright example may we learn to trust God where we cannot see him, and to say in the pauses of the wildest storms that beat upon us, "*It is well*."

We live in the dispensation of suffering, the dispensation of the cross. The Captain of our Salvation was made perfect through suffering. If a crown of glory ever encircles our brows, if our feet ever tread the

golden streets of heaven, it will be through the sufferings of our Lord. That is a wonderful passage, "Yet learned He obedience by the things which he suffered." And he gave the world a wonderful evidence of how well, as a Son, he learned obedience to his Father's will, when in the terrible hour of his agony he said, "Not my will, but thine be done." And when he would teach his people the lesson of a quiet and holy submission, he puts them through fiery trials. "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction."

When death often visits our homes, and funeral after funeral leaves our door; when our business prosperity is blighted, and our highest worldly hopes tumble about our ears a pile of ruins; when health fails, and painful days and nights are appointed us; when separated from beloved friends, and the holy activities which we enjoy in their society, we are left, for months or years, to the solitude of our sick room; when friend after friend leaves us, till we stand amid the storms of life like a tree

that the winds of heaven have stripped of every branch ; then is the time to practice the lessons of resignation which we have been taught in the school of Christ. Happy is the man who, in such circumstances, can say, "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word."

It will greatly aid us in cultivating a submissive spirit, if we learn to see God in everything. It has been said that there are two things that we should never murmur about—things that we *can help*, and things that we *cannot help*—and that would about use up all the murmuring in the world. But, certainly, no true Christian will murmur when he clearly sees God's hand in his trials. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because *thou* didst it." An old writer says, "The strokes of his hand are love, as well as the kisses of his mouth." But let the mind get into the habit of looking away from God to mere *second causes*, then may we bid adieu to all profit from our affliction, as well as all consolation to support us under it.

In such cases the soul, instead of resting upon the unshaken Rock of God's Word, seeks to comfort itself with a bundle of foolish "ifs." *If* it had not been for that treacherous friend, I would not have lost my property. *If* I had called another physician, my child might not have died. *If* I had gone to such a place I might have been in better circumstances. Ah ! poor soul, God is above and beyond all your *ifs*. All second causes are but the agents of the great First Cause, which he either sends or permits, to work out his holy designs. O, what a calm joy it gives to confide in Him who sits at the helm of affairs !

It is true that God's dealings with us are often mysterious. His providences are a chain of shining and perfect links, but the links are often hid from our view. And this is well—it is part of our probation. We are to walk by faith, not by sight ; and the more we are encompassed by clouds of perplexity, the better opportunity we have to confide in God's Word, and to

rejoice that he reigneth. Jesus has not promised to explain all his dealings with us as we go along, but he *has* promised never to leave nor forsake us; and amid our greatest perplexities he gives us the assurance, "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

O, glorious hereafter! when we shall know as we are known, and see as we are seen; when we shall have done with sin, and look into the grave of all our troubles; when we shall cast our eyes back over the way by which His hand led us; and see that it was neither too rough nor too long; and where we shall sing forever, "He has done all things well."

Another evidence of growth in grace is a truly grateful, thankful spirit. A gentleman was met by another who asked him, "Did you ever thank God for your reason?" "No, I do not know that I ever did," was the astonished reply. "Then do it now, for I have lost mine," said the other as he hastened on. The duty of thankfulness to God is seen in the fact

that we possess many blessings, and have deserved none. As sinners, we cannot point to a single gift that God was under any obligation to bestow upon us, or to continue. Nor can we point to anything that we have deserved at his hand. All that makes life desirable is the undeserved gift of his goodness. That goodness envelopes us like a garment. The earth upon which we tread is covered with it. If we look up into the heavens, it floats in every cloud, and flashes upon us from every star. It is new every morning and fresh every evening. The thankful heart exclaims with David, "How GREAT is thy goodness."

A grumbling, fretful, discontented man, is a walking pestilence. With a chronic frown upon his brow, and unhappy words welling out from his unhappy heart, he infects others with his miserable spirit. To come in contact with him is worse than going out into a cold damp fog, or a pelting hail-storm. If the weather is delightful, instead of enjoying it, he will tell you of

the awful weather we are going to have. If his children are all healthy, instead of thanking God for it, he is thinking of the long lists of diseases they have yet to go through; and his gloomy imagination is filled with coffins and graves. If his present wants are supplied, instead of enjoying thankfully the goodness of God, he is thinking of untold privations in the future. He is constantly engaged in the unprofitable business of crossing bridges before he comes to them. Blind to his present blessings, he sees only ills that may never come.

How much better the spirit of the old sailor, who, when he fell from the rigging of his ship and broke his leg, remarked that he was very thankful to God that it was not his neck. I have heard of a man who was remarkable for a happy, cheerful, thankful spirit. He said that he never felt disposed to murmur but once, and that was on a cold morning, when the ground was covered with snow, and he was under the necessity of going out almost

bare-footed. But he said that he had not gone far till he met a man who had *no feet at all*, and he thought that the time had not come for him to complain.

To count the many mercies bestowed upon us, instead of dwelling upon those withheld, or withdrawn, is the true way to cultivate a thankful heart. True thankfulness has nothing about it of stoical indifference to the trials of life. It is not like the rock that receives sunshine, shower, and storm, with the same immovable indifference. The Christian may feel acutely his trials and privations, and yet cherish a gushing gratitude for God's many mercies continued to him. Job said, "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not also receive evil?" And he closed the catalogue of his trials with a burst of thankfulness, "Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

What a cheerful, contented, thankful spirit did the Apostle Paul possess! Amid all his trials he could say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be

content." His trust was in God, and the largest wave that rolled across the ocean of life could not drive him from his anchorage on the Divine promises. In the darkest night of trouble, his hope in Christ shone bright, and he could look up with a bounding heart, and "thank God for his unspeakable gift."

The sweet Psalmist of Israel was a most grateful and thankful man. Prosperity lifted him up to exalted heights, and adversity sunk him down to great depths; but in every situation his songs of praise rolled forth from his loving heart; and he has left behind him a record of joyous praise, the most sublime, graphic, and beautiful, ever bequeathed to the Church of God. He often cried to God from the very depths, but when God heard him, he was always seen coming back with his hearty song of praise. His cry for help under the pressure of trouble was loud, but his voice of praise was equally so. Alas! how many are the reverse of this. They are loud and clamorous for the supply of their wants,

but utterly fail to come with adoring gratitude when God opens to them his hand.

An old writer says, "The Lord Jesus spreads a large table every day, and the majority who feed thereat are his enemies." Thankfulness to God is not natural to man. It is a flower that does not grow in the cold soil of an unregenerated heart. It must be planted and the soil prepared for it, by the Divine hand. It has been beautifully said that gratitude is the memory of the heart; and the heart that has been taken to Calvary, and washed in the blood that ransomed a world, will have a strong memory of the blessing given, and a ready tongue to utter God's praise. Those who are not thankful for God's unspeakable gift, cannot be expected to be really thankful for any other gift. If they will not praise the Great Giver for the greatest gift, they are not likely to praise him for any of the smaller.

Besides, the heart that has learned true thankfulness at Calvary, will be prepared for the praise of heaven. There they sing

the song of Moses and the Lamb; that is, they sing of God's redeeming love, and of his providential interferences on their behalf. From sinless lips, that great, faultless congregation shall fill eternity with their praise.

“Most that we know of heaven above,
Is that they praise, and that they love.”

Another evidence of growth in grace, is a stronger faith in the promise of God. A good man who had been very rich at one time, and then had been reduced to poverty, was observed to be happy in both conditions. He explained this by saying, “When I had all of the world that heart could wish, I enjoyed God in everything; and when I had nothing, I enjoyed everything in God.” He had found out the meaning of that passage, “Ye are poor, but ye are rich.” Trusting in the sweet promises of God, he had a never-failing bank to which he could go for the supply of all his wants.

That was an exceedingly precious promise that Paul addressed to the Philippian

Christians, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ." How very delightful that expression sounds, "My God!" What, although he was at that moment a prisoner for the truth, solitary and alone; what, although he had suffered buffetting, and reproach, and the most cruel persecutions; what, although he knew that in the future bonds and imprisonment and a violent death awaited him; yet, as long as he could look up to the God of the universe, that God who tunes the thunder's roar and softens the rage of the lightning's flash, and call him, "My God," he was indeed a happy man. Men might imprison him in loathsome dungeons, and scourge him till his blood crimsoned his prison floor; they might crush his limbs with torture, and his name with bitter reproach, but he need not care so long as his strengthening faith enabled him to say, "The Lord stood by me and comforted me."

When the bird in the tree sees any danger beneath, it flies up to a higher

branch; if the danger gets still greater, it still mounts higher; and if very great, it flies off heavenward. So let all our trials and troubles drive us nearer to God, nearer to our heavenly home, so that we can take a firmer hold of the holy promises.

The promises do not assure us of the supply of all our *desires*, but of all our *needs*. Our desires are often wrong, and such that if God were to satisfy them it would be the heaviest calamity that could happen to us. As the child often cries for things which a wise and loving parent finds it necessary to deny it, so it is with our Heavenly Father. The child may want sweetmeats when it needs medicine, and cry for a knife or razor, attracted by its bright glitter, but the parent supplies only those things that will be for its good. There are many things in our catalogue that will not be found in God's, but faith has unshaken confidence in his wisdom and love.

The promises of God are for the supply of *all* our need. All that the soul can

require to support it in trial ; to strengthen it in temptation ; to fit it for duty ; to give it the victory over besetting sins ; to cheer in seasons of gloom ; to guard in times of prosperity ;—in short, all that the soul with its vast capacity for eternal good can need, is pledged to it. Oh ! what a prayer was that which the Apostle presented for his hearers, “That ye may be filled with the fullness of God !” Ah ! surely, the soul thus filled cannot have any real need unsatisfied.

We might enumerate many other evidences of spiritual growth, such as acting more and more from principle, possessing a deeper humility, and more of the spirit of prayer ; but the above must suffice for the present. Let us seek to be Christians of high attainments in the divine life. Do not be contented with a poor, low, sickly, dwarfish piety, that is always struggling for life, and almost ready to die ; but seek to have a strong, vigorous faith, that delights in doing hard work for Jesus, and

enduring hardships in his service, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

“Moralist ! afloat on life’s rough sea,
The Christian has an art unknown to thee ;
He holds no parley with unmanly fears ;
Where duty bids he confidently steers,
Faces a thousand dangers at her call,
And, trusting in his God, surmounts them all.”

V.

DUTIES IN THE CHURCH.

DEAR reader, I take it for granted that you are now a member of Christ's Church, and that it has been your happy privilege to sit down, for the first time, at the table of the Lord. His first communion season is a time never to be forgotten by the Christian. Not that he is to attach any saving efficacy or superstitious importance to that ordinance above others, but because, from its very nature, it brings his blessed Saviour directly before him, saying, "Do this in remembrance of me." It was instituted by the Lord's

direct command, and for the express purpose of commemorating his dying love, and is to be promptly and faithfully observed till he comes in his glory.

It is sometimes the case that Christians stay away from the communion, because their feelings are not as lively as they could wish, or because there is some darkness upon their minds. I hope you will never be guilty of this great sin ; for such it undoubtedly is. It is making our own feelings the rule of duty, instead of the positive command of Christ. It is setting our own notions up as the standard of what we should do, and what we should not do, instead of the positive and express will of the Great Head of the Church. The same rule, carried out, would lead us to neglect prayer, the reading of the Bible, attendance upon the means of grace, and in short, everything that we did not feel like doing at the time. Why should Christians stay away from the very means which Christ has instituted for their spiritual profit, because they can discover many imperfec-

tions about themselves? It is as absurd as staying away from the fire because you are cold, or from the table because you are hungry, or refusing to take medicine because you are sick. In the keeping of God's commands there is great reward, and in waiting upon God, in the means of his appointment, the obedient soul renews its strength.

There are others who stay away from the Communion because they are offended with some of their brethren, or see in them some wrong. When you turn your back upon the Lord's Supper, and refuse to commemorate what your Saviour did for you on Calvary, you should remember that one of these days he is going to ask your reasons for so doing. And he will not be satisfied with *excuses*, but must have *reasons*. Will it be a *reason* to say that you did wrong, because somebody else did wrong; that you deliberately concluded that you would neglect one plain duty, because some one else neglected another duty? If that brother has done some

great evil in the sight of God, will it mend the matter for you to do another wrong by despising Christ's ordinances? You say that a certain brother has offended you, and that you will not come to the Communion while he is there. Has Christ offended you also? If not, why do you seek to revenge the wrong done upon your Lord and his ordinance? He bids you come to his table in remembrance of him, and you reply, "Lord, I will not remember thee, because this brother has done wrong." Such conduct is wicked and unreasonable. It is sometimes the result of ignorance, but for the most part is the indulgence of bad temper, under the plea of conscientious motives. It is like Jonah, who professed to be *angry on principle*, and had the impudence to tell God to his face, "I do well to be angry."

In vindication of such conduct the passage is often quoted, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before

the altar, and go thy way ; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." This has no reference to the Lord's Supper, and if it had, it would be no excuse for the conduct we have been condemning. It says, "If thou rememberest that thy brother hath *aught against thee*," but such persons act as if it read, "If thou rememberest that thou hast aught against thy brother." Even if this applied to the Communion, it would be a brother having something against *you*, and not your having something *against a brother*, that would be a cause of staying away. My dear reader, when Christ spreads his table, it is your duty to be there, whoever is there. Of course you are to use your influence for the purity of the church, and the Master has laid down the proper way in which this is to be done ; but forsaking the Communion is not that way.

And now that you are a member of the church, let me earnestly exhort you to be punctual in your attendance on all her appointments. There are some who make

a small thing an excuse for absenting themselves from the house of God upon the Sabbath. Out about their business on Saturday and on Monday, whatever may be the weather, they will stay at home on Sabbath, and urge excuses that they ought to be ashamed to present to their fellow-men, and that they *will* be ashamed to present to the Great Judge. If a man has an important note to meet at the bank, he will not neglect it because the weather is a little too cold or too hot, or because the clouds threaten rain. No, he will go forth with energy and attend to his business. And yet the same man will make these things an excuse for not going to the house of God, and paying his vows to the Most High. I have known a lady excuse herself from going out more than once on the Sabbath, on the plea that she could not go out evenings, and yet be out to parties, or concerts, or lectures, two or three evenings in the week. Do such people think that God is going to be mocked in this way?

Listen to the language of one who had

erred in this way, but repented : “ A Sabbath at home, how unlike one spent in the courts of the Lord ! I become restless—feel that something is wanting—my mind wanders — weariness pervades the body, and I am tempted to seek relief in sleep. I am unusually troubled with worldly thoughts, and find a strong temptation to read something not appropriate to the day, to engage in worldly conversation, to repair to my store, or to visit my neighbor. A Sabbath at home is to me a Sabbath lost. I tried it once, and dread its influence. But I have learned something. Other men are like myself. Now I see why some of my fellow-Christians have so little religious enjoyment, knowledge and influence. They are frequently absent from the house of God. Who can afford to *lose a single Sabbath* ? And yet how *many, many* such precious days are lost, and worse than lost, in this land of Sabbaths.”

My dear reader, make a right beginning in this respect. Be punctual in your place at the house of God on the Sabbath, and

at the prayer-meeting during the week. Every pastor has members of his flock that he can calculate with certainty upon seeing in their places regularly. He can depend upon them. They make their arrangements with a view to the appointments of the church, and make everything else bend before the calls of duty. If, on the evening of the prayer-meeting, visitors call, they will ask them to go with them, or beg to be excused for an hour, so that the precious opportunity may not be lost. There are others whose attendance is fitful and uncertain. They permit every trifle to act as a hindrance in their way. If some notable lecturer is to speak, or some popular singer is to appear, or a political meeting is to be held, they are off in full pursuit of the novelty, while the prayer-meeting is left to get on as it may. If the pastor acted in this way, they would be the first to complain. But is there one Bible for the pastor and another for the member? If it is the pastor's duty to preach, it is the duty of the members to be there to hear him;

and if he is to lead the prayer-meeting, it is the duty of every member to be there to sustain it. The same precious blood was shed for both, and they are both laid under the same law of love.

Such persons little know how much they lose by their neglect of the means of grace. An old Christian lady was noticed to be very regular in her attendance at church, and that she was always there before the service began. She said that the Lord had promised to be there and meet with her, but that he had not said in what part of the service he would come—in the first hymn, or in the first prayer, in the reading of the Scriptures, or in the sermon; and, therefore, she resolved to be present the whole time, that she might not lose the blessing. She also remarked that she did not like to come late to the house of God, for it was a part of her religion not to disturb the religion of other people. What a blessing Thomas lost by not being present with the other disciples, in the upper room, when our Lord appeared to them, after his resur-

rection, and said, "Peace be unto you." Of course, we do not know the reason why he was not there, but as he was evidently in a dark, unbelieving state of mind, it is likely he could have been there had he wished. He lost a most precious blessing to his soul by his neglect, and when the brethren next met him, and began to tell him, in glowing terms, what a good meeting they had, and how the Lord had appeared to them, he cut them short by refusing to believe a word that they uttered, and sullenly said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Another thing that I would urge upon the young convert is, to cultivate a spirit of love toward every member of the church. This is a mark of true discipleship. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." Be it yours

to promote the spirit of love, by the display of a loving and an affectionate disposition. I would not be the man to disturb the harmony of a church of Christ, for the globe upon which I stand. Wo to the man by whom such offences come ! There are persons who are very sensitive and suspicious, and are constantly taking offence at their brethren where no offence was intended. They will say harsh and bitter things, but do not you imitate them, nor contend with them. It takes two to make a quarrel, and by showing them a more excellent way, you may win them to a more lovely spirit. “Ye who are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.” I was much struck with a remark made by the Duke of Wellington in one of his letters : “I am not in the habit of deciding upon such matters hastily or in anger ; and the proof of this is, that I never had a quarrel with any man in my life.” This is a remarkable statement, coming from one who had passed through such a long and

public career, and who had been brought in contact with all kinds of men.

“ Learn, O my soul, what God demands
Is not a faith like barren sands,
But fruit of heavenly hue;
By this we prove that Christ we know,
If in his holy steps we go.
Faith works by love if true.”

If Christian faithfulness requires that you should notice offences committed against the laws of Christ, by a member of the church, be sure that you go to work according to the rules laid down by the Lord, in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew. Do not whisper the offence to some one as a *great secret*, who, unable to keep the secret himself, will get some one to help him, and thus the matter be talked about all over the church, before you have an opportunity of seeing the offending brother himself. I have known a world of trouble brought upon churches by such blundering. Go to the offender at once, and let the matter be talked of between him and you alone. And do not go in a haughty, magisterial, super-

cilious spirit, else you will be sure to fail in winning your brother. Like begets like; and a bitter, haughty spirit on your part, will beget bitter, haughty retorts on his. Go in the spirit of love and of prayer, remembering that you are yourself imperfect and liable to fall.

Should you not succeed, then you must take another brother with you, and let him be the most spiritual, loving, and prayerful spirit you can find in the church. If you both fail in bringing the offender to repentance, then you must bring the matter before the church. But be not ready to take offence. Do not constitute yourself a kind of detective or spy in the church. Prevention is better than cure; and let it be yours to keep up the spirit of vital religion, so as to prevent backsliding in your own heart, and in the hearts of others.

“ Be not swift to take offense!

Let it pass!

Anger is a foe to sense;

Let it pass!

Brood not darkly o'er a wrong

Which will disappear ere long;

Rather sing this cheery song—
 Let it pass!
 Echo not an angry word;
 Let it pass!
 Think how often you have erred;
 Let it pass!
 Since our joys must pass away,
 Like the dewdrops on the spray,
 Wherefore should our sorrows stay?
 Let them pass!"

Permit me to enjoin upon you another point, before closing this chapter; and that is, to make it a matter of conscience to bear your share of the pecuniary burdens of the church, according as the Lord has prospered you. To build churches, and keep them in proper repair and order; to pay the pastor's salary punctually, and to carry on the benevolent enterprises of the church, costs something; and every member is under obligation to bear his full proportion of that cost. To unite with any organization, and enjoy the full advantages of it, and yet do nothing to help sustain it, would be regarded as supremely mean, even by worldly men. A gentleman being told of

a certain rich man, that he was converted, asked, "Is his purse converted?" And the man who is really consecrated to Christ, will be willing to make pecuniary sacrifices to promote his cause.

What you do for the support of the cause of truth, let it be done spontaneously and promptly. Do not require the officers of the church to ask and urge you again and again. Do not require them to waste their time in finding you. These brethren do the collecting of the funds for carrying on the affairs of the church voluntarily, and none but those who have tried it can tell what a laborious work it is. It is often made more so than it need be by the carelessness of some brethren. I have known a deacon call at a brother's office four times to collect his subscription without finding him in, and yet that brother passed the deacon's residence every day, and could have saved all this trouble by handing in what was due. When the collection is taken up for the missionary society, and you happen to be absent that day, do not

let the cause of missions suffer from that fact. Act from principle, and give as in your Master's sight.

Let the following statement, by a pastor, illustrate this point. "A short time since, the Rev. Mr. A. presented to my people the claims of one of our great benevolent societies; and on Monday I called with him on several members of the congregation. Entering the counting-room of a merchant, the following interview, in substance occurred:

Mr. A.—"Good morning, Mr. B.; our openings for usefulness are multiplying, and all that the churches will intrust to us, we can most profitably employ on the field of our labors."

Mr. B.—"I am always glad to see you, Mr. A., and to do what I can for your noble society," handing him a liberal donation; "we all ought to feel that we are but stewards, and be diligent in doing good while we may."

Mr. A.—"Thank you, thank you, Mr. B. We know you are a steadfast friend,

and so is your partner, Mr. C. Is he in this morning?"

Mr. B.—“No, Sir; he is in Europe. He was unexpectedly called to France on business, and sailed in the steamer some weeks since, to be absent about six months.”

Mr. A.—“Then, I suppose, we shall lose his subscription this year?”

Mr. B.—“No, Sir; one of the last things he did before sailing was, to request me to attend to his charities with the same care as to his other business, and to give for him to the various objects of benevolence, as they might come before our church, about the same that he gave last year, or, if anything, rather more, as this year we have been prospered. Do you remember what was the amount of his subscription last year?”

Mr. A.—“One hundred dollars.”

Mr. B.—“Well, here is a check for one hundred and fifty dollars, which, I think, is about what he would give if he were at home.”

Were all professing Christians thus to act under the eye of the Saviour, remembering that they are but stewards of his money, and give according to system and principle, there would soon be no lack of funds to carry out the plans of the largest benevolence.

VI.

DUTIES TO THE PASTOR.

THE relation between a Christian pastor and his people is represented in the Scriptures as very solemn and tender. He is God's messenger to speak to them the words of truth, to feed their souls with the bread of life, to watch for their souls as one who is soon to give an account to Him who sent him. He is to speak to them the truth in love, and not to suffer sin to pass unrebuked; regarding neither the frowns nor the smiles, the cheering nor the derision of those around him. He is to seek, above all things, their

edification and spiritual profit, to study to build them up in faith and knowledge, and to have no greater joy than to see his spiritual children walking in the truth.

On the other hand, his people are to esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake. They are to give him a place in their hearts and in their prayers. They are to defend his reputation, to submit to his authority, as long as it is scriptural, to provide for his temporal wants, as long as he gives himself wholly to the Lord's work, and greatly to honor the message which he brings them from God. The relation of the pastor and flock is such that it should last for life, unless dissolved by some very marked and plain providence, in which the will of the Great Head of the Church will be clearly seen. The modern notion of *hiring* a pastor for a year, just as a farmer hires a man for his harvest work, so much work for so much pay, and then dismissing him, when a few light-minded people profess to be dissatisfied, and want a

change, is a complete caricature of the apostolic relation of pastor and people.

Give your pastor your love and confidence. It is natural that you should be deeply attached to that minister under whose preaching you were brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. That you should like his preaching best, and that you should feel a warm glow of emotion at the very mention of his name in after life, is all very natural and proper. No minister of good sense will feel offended, but rather pleased, to hear Christians thus speak of their former pastors. But when converts set up a particular minister as an idol in their souls ; when they speak as if they could get good under no instruction but his ; when no prayers can lead their devotions heavenward but his ; and when they refuse to give their affection and confidence to any other servant of the Lord Jesus, they show that their religion is of a very superficial character, and justify serious doubts whether they are not *man's converts*, rather than the converts of Christ.

No matter what pastor God in his providence places you under, if he be only a good man give him your hearty confidence and co-operation. He may not be so talented and eloquent as some others, for God in his sovereign goodness has given a variety of gifts to his ministers, but he is God's messenger to you, and it is at the peril of your soul that you despise his message. By careful study of the Word of God, he has prepared his sermons with great mental toil, and poured his soul out in prayer over them, and there is good for your soul in them, if you only place your mind in a proper attitude. Not the spirit of carping criticism and fault-finding is blessed, but that of earnest thirsting after truth, saying, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Professing Christians will sometimes go home from the house of God, and in the presence of their children and of the impenitent, utter the most unmerciful criticisms upon their pastor and his public efforts ; and then wonder that their children are not converted. In the great day of

God, it may be found that they have been the murderers of their children's souls, by filling their minds with prejudice against the truth and its messenger.

Go to the pastor in all your spiritual difficulties, and make him the confidant of your soul-experiences. He will be able to cheer and encourage you, and to make the truth, in its beautiful adaptations, to bear upon your case. And when you receive good under his ministry, do not be afraid to mention it to him. It will not make him proud, but will cheer and encourage him. When any one seems impressed under his preaching, bring the case under his observation, that it may be made a matter of special prayer and inquiry. You will thus become a co-worker with your pastor; and he needs such aids. There is no work on earth so solemn and responsible, and none that so completely taxes all a man's best powers. None but those who have been called to the work, can tell the care and anxiety that fill the faithful pastor's heart, often chasing sleep from his pillow

for whole nights. Resolve that if you cannot lighten these cares, that, at least, you will not intentionally add to their number. God may bless you for his servant's sake.

But again, let me urge you to pray for your pastor. I am aware that this may seem a very common-place remark, but the *act* spoken of is no common-place thing. More depends upon this than we have even imagination to conceive of. See with what earnestness the Apostles urged the churches to pray for them, showing what an important matter they regarded it. A minister is set up in a prominent position. His every action and movement is watched and talked about. He is a target set up for every gossiping and malignant tongue to shoot at. He is a man of like passions with others, exposed to peculiar temptations, and Satan knows that if he can cause him to fall, the injury done to the cause of truth will be very great. We may be sure, therefore, that the enemy will try every hellish dart to bring him down. He needs

the prayers of God's people as a man, that more than common supplies of grace may be given to him, that he may be an example to the flock, and be of good report to all.

And he needs the prayers of the faithful as a minister, that the Holy Spirit may be with him in his studies and in his public ministrations. If the Holy Spirit is not with him, his best efforts will utterly fail. The attention of sinners will not be arrested, and their minds will grow darker and their hearts harder, under the preaching of the word. The church will not be interested as they ought, and the sad spectacle of a listless congregation will be exhibited in the sight of God, angels, and men. Can there be any sight more heart-rending to a truly godly minister, while preaching those great truths that thrill all heaven with delight, than to see some sleeping, some yawning, some gazing vacantly around, and frequently consulting their watches, as if thinking more of their dinners than the great business of the sanctuary. Yet all this is often seen when the sermon is

able and eloquent, and when the best part of the week has been given to its preparation. Let the Spirit of God be poured out, and, under the same sermon, what a different state of things ! A deep solemnity pervades the house, every eye is fixed upon the preacher, tears stream down many faces, that old hardened sinner trembles so that he can scarcely keep his seat, and that old saint seems ready to shout aloud, "It is the Lord's doings, and it is marvelous in our eyes." One mighty wave of salvation rolls over the congregation and preacher and people separate, feeling that it was good to be there. Such is the state of things that God gives to a praying people—to a people that plead and wrestle before God in private for their minister.

On this subject Prof. Finney says : "I have seen Christians who would be in an agony, when the minister was going into the pulpit, for fear his mind should be in a cloud, or his heart cold, or he should have no unction, and so a blessing should not come. I have labored with a man of

this sort. He would pray until he got an assurance in his mind that God would be with me in preaching. I have known the time when he has been in darkness for a season, while the people were gathering, and his mind was full of anxiety, and he would go again and again to pray, till finally he would come into the room with a placid face, and say, 'The Lord has come, and he will be with us.' And I do not know that I ever found him mistaken."

Again he says, "I have known a church bear their minister on their arms in prayer from day to day, and watch with anxiety unutterable, to see that he has the Holy Ghost with him in his labors! When they feel and pray thus, O what feelings and what looks are manifest in the congregation! They have felt anxiety unutterable to have the word come with power, and take effect, and when they see their prayer answered, and they hear a word or a sentence come *warm* from the heart, and take effect among the people, you can see their whole souls look out of their eyes.

How different is the case where the church feel that the *minister* is praying, and so there is no need of their praying! They are mistaken. The church must desire and pray for the blessing. God says he will be inquired of *by the house of Israel*. I wish you to feel that there can be no substitute for this."

Do not allow yourself to be made a party in any scheme against the pastor. If, for any reason, a minister's usefulness in a place has come to an end, and it is thought that he ought to leave, that the good of the church requires it, then, let the leading men of the church that he knows have been his true friends, go to him in a straightforward Christian spirit, and tell him so; and in nearly every instance the separation will be effected without difficulty. But there are, unfortunately, in some churches men who will not pursue a straightforward way, if they can find a crooked one. They will wire-pull, and plot, and form parties, and seek the removal of a minister, when the highest interests of the church require that

he should remain. One does it from the mere love of change, another because he has some friend that he wishes to get into the pastoral office, another because some outsider has become offended with the minister, and withdrawn his subscription, and some because the truth spoken has pinched their consciences.

My dear young reader, have nothing to do with these plotters. The whole thing is wicked in its inception and execution. God must frown upon it, and will visit with a fearful "Woe," those by whom such offences come. Let the following statement by one who has had experience in this matter, teach its own lesson.

He says, "Many years ago, I was drawn into a scheme to uproot one of God's servants from the field in which he had planted him. I and the men that led me—for I admit that I was a dupe and a tool—flattered ourselves that we were conscientious. We thought that we were doing God service when we drove that holy man from his pulpit and his work, and said we

considered his labors ended in B——, where I then lived ; we groaned because there was no revival, while we were gossiping about and criticizing, and crushing instead of upholding by our efforts and our prayers, the instrument at whose hand we harshly demanded the blessing. Well, sir, he could not drag on the chariot of salvation with half a dozen of us taunting him with his weakness, while we hung on as a dead weight to the wheels ; he had not the power of the Spirit, and could not convert men ; so we hunted him like a deer, till, torn and bleeding, he fled into a covert to die. Scarcely had he gone, when God came among us by his Spirit to show that he had blessed the labors of his dear, rejected servant. Our own hearts were broken and our wayward children converted, and I resolved at a convenient season to visit my former pastor and confess my sin, and thank him for his faithfulness to my wayward sons, which like long-buried seed had now sprung up. But God denied me that relief, that he might teach me a

lesson every child of his ought to learn, that he who toucheth one of his servants toucheth the apple of his eye. I heard my old pastor was ill, and taking my son with me, set out on a twenty-five miles' ride to see him. It was evening when I arrived, and his wife, with the spirit which any true woman ought to exhibit towards one who had so wronged her husband, denied me admittance to his chamber. She said, and her words were as arrows to my soul, 'He may be dying, and the sight of your face might add to his anguish!'

" 'Has it come to this,' said I to myself, 'that the man whose labors had, through Christ, brought me into his fold, whose hands had buried me in baptism, who had consoled my spirit in a terrible bereavement, and who had, till designing men had alienated us, been to me as a brother—that this man could not die in peace with my face before him. 'God pity me!' I cried, 'what have I done?' I confessed my sin to that meek woman and implored her for Christ's sake to let me kneel before

His dying servant, and receive his forgiveness. What did I care then whether the pews by the door were rented or not? I would gladly have taken his whole family to my home forever as my own flesh and blood, but no such happiness was before me.

“As I entered the room of the blessed warrior, whose armor was just falling from his limbs, he opened his languid eyes and said, ‘Brother Lee! Brother Lee!’ I bent over him and sobbed out ‘My pastor!’ Then raising his white hand, he said in a deep, impressive voice, ‘Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm!’ I spoke tenderly to him, told him I had come to confess my sin, and bring some of his fruit to him, calling my son to tell him how he found Christ. But he was unconscious of all around; the sight of my face had brought the last pang of earth to his spirit.

“I kissed his brow, and told him how dear he had been to me; I craved his pardon for my unfaithfulness, and promised

to care for his widow and fatherless little ones: but his only reply, murmured as if in a troubled dream, was ‘Touch not my annointed, and do my prophets no harm.’

“I stayed by him all night, and at day-break I closed his eyes. I offered his widow a house to live in, the remainder of her days; but like a heroine she said, ‘I freely forgive you, but my children, who entered deeply into their father’s anguis , shall never see me so regardless of his memory as to take any thin from those who caused it. He has left us all with his covenant God, and he will care for us.’

“Those dying words sounded in my ears from that coffin and that grave. When I slept, Christ stood before me in my dreams, saying, ‘Touch not mine annointed, and do my prophets no harm.’ These words followed me till I realized fully the esteem in which Christ holds those men who have given up all for his sake, and I vowed to love them evermore for his sake, even if they were not perfect. And since that day, Sir, I have talked less than before,

and have supported my pastor, even if he is not a 'very extraordinary man.' My tongue shall cleave to the roof of my mouth, and my right hand forget its cunning, before I dare to put asunder what God has joined together."

The above narrative was spoken to one who had approached him to help in inducing a pastor to resign; and, therefore, he added, "I will not join you in the scheme that brought you here; and, moreover, if I hear another word of this from your lips, I shall ask my brethren to deal with you as with them who cause divisions. I would give all I own to recall what I did thirty years ago. Stop where you are, and pray God, if perchance the thought of your heart be forgiven you."

There are a great many ways in which you can help your pastor in his solemn and responsible work. A very distinguished and successful minister said that a poor old lady in his church helped him to preach more than all the books in his library. She was always in her place in the house

of God, and so deeply attentive that she scarcely lifted her eyes from his face, from the beginning to the close of his sermon. When he would bring out some sweet promise, or the rich unction of Gospel truth, her countenance would light up with joy, and her whole manner would show that she was enjoying a feast at the banqueting table of God. When the weather was depressing, the congregation small, or bodily languor made him feel as if he could scarcely preach at all, the sight of that one hearer's eager and expectant face would rouse up his whole soul. Sometimes in his study, when tempted to take, for the next Sabbath, some speculative theme in which he might display his learning, the thought of that old lady would call him back to the rich pastures of the Gospel ; for he felt that she would be disappointed of her Sabbath feast.

By a punctual attendance upon the prayer-meetings of the church, and promptly taking part in the services, you can greatly aid your pastor. Many stay away

from these meetings altogether, and many who attend embarrass the pastor very much by their way of conducting themselves. They will come late, skulk away into some corner as much out of sight as possible, see the meeting dragging along for want of some one to take part, and yet keep their seats, and do nothing to promote the interest of the meeting. And yet such persons will be the very first to complain of the meetings being dull. Now, any thing that is worth doing at all is worth doing well. Go to the meeting early. Go forward near where the pastor is, as if you felt identified with the people of God and with the welfare of Zion. Do not allow long pauses to throw a damper upon the meeting, but speak and pray, and encourage others to do the same, so that the whole time of the meeting may be taken up. All this will cheer and comfort the pastor very much, and, what is far more important, it will secure the approval of the gracious Saviour, who from his lofty seat in the heavens is looking down to see how you do your duty.

When your pastor feels it his duty to faithfully expose the sins of professors, and pointedly speak to sinners, sustain him in it, even when the word condemns yourself. He is God's servant, and at the peril of his soul he must preach what his Master bids him. A minister was once asked not to preach so hard, for if he did, certain persons would leave the church. "Is not the preaching true?" he asked. "Yes." "Does not God bless it?" "Yes." "Did you ever see the like of this work before in this place?" "No, I never did." "Well," said the minister, "the devil has sent you to me, to get me to let down the tone of my preaching, so as to ease the minds of the ungodly." The man took the rebuke like a good man, and never afterward complained of plain preaching.

VII.

DUTIES IN THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

IT IS the uniform desire of all true converts to do something to glorify Christ. The joy and peace which they have themselves experienced, they long to see others enjoy; and having been led to feel the value of their own souls, they are made intensely to long for the salvation of the souls of others. Every soul that knows Jesus will long to work for Jesus, and the honest, spontaneous cry of the renewed heart is, "Lord what wouldst thou have me to do?"

Now, in looking for a field in which to labor for Christ, you will find a most useful and suitable one in the Sabbath school. God alone can tell, eternity alone can unfold, the good that has been done by these institutions. It was a happy day for the church, a happy day for the world, when Robert Raikes conceived the idea of gathering the children together on the Sabbath "to hear of heaven, and learn the way." He had little idea of the great things that would grow out of such a small beginning, but those who are faithful in a few things, God will make rulers over many things.

In giving an account of his first efforts that good man says: "The beginning of this scheme was entirely owing to accident. Some business leading me one morning into the suburbs of the city, where the lowest of the people reside, I was struck with concern at seeing a group of children, wretchedly ragged, playing in the street. I asked an inhabitant whether those children belonged to that part of the town, and

lamented their misery and idleness. Ah, sir, said the woman to whom I was speaking, could you take a view of this part of the town on Sunday, you would be shocked indeed, for then the street is filled with multitudes of these wretches, who, released on that day from employment, spend their time in noise and riot, cursing and swearing in a manner so horrid as to convey to any serious mind an idea of hell, rather than of any other place. Upon the Sabbath they are all given up to follow their inclinations without restraint, as their parents, totally abandoned themselves, have no idea of instilling into the minds of their children principles to which they themselves are entire strangers."

He then formed the first Sabbath school in the world, and after a three years' trial he writes to a friend, "I wish you were here to make inquiry into the effort. A woman who lives in a lane where I fixed a school, told me some time ago, that the place was quite a heaven upon Sundays, compared to what it used to be. The num-

ber who have learned to read and say their catechism is so great that I am astonished at it." From this small beginning the work spread, till in Great Britain there were about one million of children in Sabbath schools, in the course of a few years. And now, in the United States, and all over the world, millions of voices unite in singing, "I am glad I'm in this army."

And yet, though no one denies the good that these schools are doing, it is a melancholy fact that superintendents often find it hard to get teachers enough out of the church to sustain them. You will sometimes find a church numbering three or four hundred members, and yet their Sabbath school really languishing for want of teachers. This is a shame and a disgrace in the sight of the world, and must be highly displeasing to that blessed Saviour who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." I hope, my reader, that you will require no urging to engage in this work, but that from a deep sense of duty, and

personal obligations to Him who bought you with His own blood, you will enter upon it with all your heart.

In order that your mind may be suitably impressed with the importance of the work, think of the infinite value of the souls you are going to instruct. They are to live forever, and your words may make impressions that will last through eternal ages.

"Don't write there," said one to a lad who was writing with a diamond pin on a pane of glass in the window of a hotel.

"Why?" said he.

"Because you can't rub it out," was the reply.

Remember that it is upon deathless spirits that you are writing and making impressions, and that these impressions are to remain forever—can never be rubbed out; and let this thought make you solemnly careful what thoughts you present to the minds of your young charge. You are to meet them again at the bar of God, and to give a strict account of what you have spoken.

Seek to meet your class, therefore, with a tender, loving spirit—that spirit that brought Jesus from his throne in glory to suffer the agonies of the cross. A great painter had just finished a gentleman's portrait, and the artist asked him his opinion of it.

“It is certainly like, but much better looking,” the gentleman said.

“It is the truth told lovingly,” was the reply of the painter.

There is a transforming, melting, magical power in love, that will be felt by the most careless and hardened. A teacher that has prayed for his class, and comes to them with his heart full of love for their souls, will have better order, better attention, and do a thousand times more good, than he who loses his temper and permits himself to indulge an angry spirit. Let the following case illustrate, “Not long ago, a gentleman visited a Sabbath school, and being a little before the time of opening he looked around him. One class that he noticed had four boys in it. Soon their

teacher, a tall, fine-looking young man, came in, but with a downcast countenance. He took his seat with a cold, morose, almost angry look. He paid, seemingly, no attention to the boys. A cap was knocked off the seat. That made a titter. The teacher turned around and said sharply, 'Boys, be still!' Soon something else caused a louder titter to pass around the class. Moving quickly round a second time, he said, 'Boys, I tell you be still!' and his face again assumed its cold expression, now slightly tinged with real crossness. A third slight disturbance occurred, when with look and voice and manner decidedly angry, he said, 'Boys, I tell you again to stop, I won't have this!'"

Now, it would be impossible for that teacher to do his class any good. It has been truly said that to make a child angry during his lesson, is to give him his food scalding hot. We must not forget that we were once children ourselves and had childish faults; and that it is hard for the young to fix their minds for any great

length of time upon serious things. Make your instructions attractive by preparing yourself with illustrations suitable to the young mind. Study the lesson carefully, and with all the aids you can find. Be kind and affectionate to your little charge, and you will soon gain an influence over them that will be seen in its blessed results forever. If they are sick or in trouble visit them at their homes. Show them that you are their best friend, and you will bind them to you for life. When I think of my Sabbath school teacher my heart bounds with gratitude, and there is no man in the world I would be more glad to see.

Let your instructions be spiritual and practical, and such as will tend directly to the conversion of their souls. Dr. Payson says, "If God should place in your hand a diamond, and tell you to inscribe on it a sentence, which should be read at the last day, and shown there as an idea of your thoughts and feelings, what caution would you exercise in the selection! This is what God has done! He has placed before you

immortal minds, more imperishable than the diamond, on which you are continually inscribing by your spirit or example something which will remain, and be exhibited, for or against you at the judgment day." There are some teachers whose instructions are almost entirely speculative. The wanderings of the children of Israel before reaching the promised land; the description of the temple of Solomon; the journeys of the apostle Paul, with a geographical account of the countries which he passed through and the cities he visited; together with curious questions to be solved from the Bible. Now, I do not say that the knowledge of such things is not useful, but it does not tend to promote the *highest* object of Sabbath school instruction, the conversion of the souls of the young. The illumination of the intellect is good in its place, but the heart must not be forgotten.

Remember that children are capable of conversion at a very early age. Timothy, *from a child*, knew the Holy Scriptures, and was made wise unto salvation by them.

I once knew a lady who, in her instructions, aimed at the conversion of her class constantly. It was her habit to pray for each one specially, to visit them at their homes for religious conversation, and to watch anxiously for any tokens of the truth beginning to take effect. The result was, that conversions were frequent in her class. Teach your class *how* they can be saved from their lost and perishing condition. Hold up the Cross, before their young eyes, in its saving power. The Gospel in its beautiful simplicity is admirably adapted to the mind of the child as well as the philosopher. And no matter what else you teach them, if you neglect this, you leave them destitute of eternal life. A man who had lately been converted said to his minister :

“ O, sir, give your congregation something to do that will make their peace with God, and you will please them mightily. It is just what people like. Why, the biggest miser in the parish would pull out his purse and give something to help to

build a church, and they would put a steeple on it that would reach up near the clouds, and put a weathercock on the top of it again, if you would just tell them that it would help to save them. People don't like, sir, to think that they can do nothing; and when they hear ministers preaching, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;' they step over it, and over it, and miss it, perhaps, like me, for twenty-seven years; and some, I am afraid, even till they die."

Another matter I would urge upon you. Be punctual and persevering in your attendance upon the Sabbath school. One of the greatest difficulties that superintendents have to contend with is, the irregularity of teachers in their attendance. They will take a class and begin with great seeming earnestness, but in a few months their zeal begins to flag, and they will be frequently absent; it may be, give up altogether. I have seen a class of thoughtless boys far more punctual in their attendance than their teacher, and he, too, a

professing Christian. This is a sad sight, and calculated to do great injury to the cause of truth. My reader, I hope better things of you. Be in your place, at your post of duty, regularly, as the holy day of God dawns upon you. If compelled to be absent, state the reason to your class, and introduce a friend to take your place till you return.

And do not give way to discouragement, if you are not so successful as you could wish. It is peculiarly a work of faith. You may be doing a great deal more good than you can see, and at any rate, it is yours to go on in the path of duty, sowing the seed, and leaving the result with God. "It is no use to try," said a young man, "they are so careless and unconcerned, that I am quite sure that no good can be done." An aged gentleman, to whom the remark was made, replied, "Such an argument would at one time have satisfied me ; now, however, I can see its fallacy. It is forty years since I was first a Sabbath school teacher ; and the boys whom I

taught seemed so perversely deaf to all my words, that at length I considered myself justified in giving it up as a hopeless task. During the ensuing thirty years of my life, I continued uninterested in the cause of Sabbath schools, until a circumstance occurred which led me to see my error, and to return to my duty.

“One evening as I was returning from church, I was accosted by a man who smiled in my face and holding out his hand to me blushing, inquired if my name was not Mr. P——? I answered that it was so. ‘Do you remember,’ added he, ‘a boy of the name of Dempster, that attended your Sabbath school about thirty years ago?’ ‘Dempster!’ cried I, ‘I remember Tom Dempster very well; and a very wild and wicked boy he was!’ And that wild and wicked boy was I,’ said the man; ‘though now, thanks be to God, I am a very different person from what I was then. It was your instructions, blessed by God’s Spirit, that brought conviction of

the truth home to my mind, long after I had left your school.' ”

Said the old gentleman, as he concluded his statement, “ My object has since been, to *do* my work, and *pray* for the Spirit to do his.”

“ Ye who on each returning sacred day
Circled by listening youthful groups are seen,
Who pour instruction on the tender mind,
From the pure well-spring of eternal truth;
In joyful hope pursue your work of love.
The Shepherd's eye, which watches all the lambs,
Upon you smiles, his kind approval cheers.
Hands, which the temple of our God shall rear,
'Tis yours to guide and train to heavenly skill.
They whom benighted heathen tribes shall hail,
' How beauteous are their feet who publish peace,'
Learn from your lips salvation's joyful sound.”

VIII.

DUTIES IN THE WORLD.

WHEN God converts a man he is no doubt that moment prepared for heaven. He is washed in the blood that cleanses from all sin, and by the righteousness of Jesus fitted for the society of the sinless congregation above. Why, then, is he not at once taken there? Because he has a work to do for others—a testimony to bear for the Lord Jesus, and an example of holy consistency of life to show, that may lead men to glorify his Father in heaven. He is to live to purpose, to live in a way worthy of an

immortal being—a probationer for eternity. He is to seek to be useful, and every day he lives to try and make the world better and happier for his having lived in it.

It is through his people that God carries on the mighty purposes of his love on earth. When Christ fed the people in a miraculous manner with a few loaves, it is said that he gave the bread to the disciples, and *they* gave it to the multitude. And so it is still. The church is the appointed instrument by which the bread of life is to be distributed to the nations of the earth. We sometimes hear it said of a professing Christian, “He is a good man, but he is not a useful man.” The wonder in such a case is how he can be said to be good at all. The great difficulty is that, in the opinion of many, the indulgence of certain amiable dispositions, and good feelings, and benevolent emotions is called goodness; whereas if these are confined to the individual and do not bring forth fruits to bless the world, they become only a refined form of selfishness. The great reason why God converts

a soul, is not merely to secure the salvation of the individual, but to start him on a career of usefulness that may bring forth blessed results, lasting as eternity. Hence Christians in their new life are said to be "created unto good works." They are as much made to be useful as the sun is made to shine, or as the air is made to be breathed. It is not enough that we "cease to do evil," we must also "learn to do well."

If then a Christian professor is not a useful man, it becomes a very serious question whether he is a Christian at all. The great Master, whose name he bears, went about constantly doing good. To do good to others was the delight of his soul, his meat and his drink. By day, by night, in season and out of season, he was at this work of love. His followers trod in his footsteps, and left us not a mere record of their feelings, their emotions, or their opinions; but of the "Acts of the Apostles." A Christian in a truly healthy state of mind, retiring to rest at the close of a

day in which he had done nothing for Jesus, would be unable to find repose—would be disturbed by the groans and cries of those who are ready to perish, and would start from his unrefreshing pillow, resolved to work while it is called to-day. To save our country from the dark designs of traitors, we have witnessed such a display of patriotism as has astonished the world. By hundreds of thousands, men have left their prosperous business, their comfortable homes, their loving friends; and amid the roar of battle, while the ground quaked with the thunder of the conflict, and the heavens grew black with the smoke of death's engines, have bravely laid down their lives for their country. And this is right. But ought not the love of Christ to constrain us to make equal sacrifices for the souls of men?

Suppose, dear reader, that you are sitting in your own comfortable home, after the toils and the cares of the day are over, and the shadows of evening are gathering around you. All nature is calm and serene;

and as the setting sun lights up the clouds into ever-varying and fantastic forms, and gilds every object around you with his departing glory, you feel your mind drawn into a solemn, meditative mood, and lifted "From nature up to nature's God."

But you look up and see a stranger approach your dwelling. His first appearance awes and impresses you. His look is grave and solemn; his cast of countenance tender and benevolent; his apparel plain and travel-worn; but there is a holy dignity about him, that makes you feel as you never did in mortal presence before. A tear trembles in his eye and rolls down his expressive face, while his bosom heaves under emotions too big for utterance. He speaks—and his words are words of fire, that burn into your soul. His thoughts thrill your heart and exert an unearthly influence upon you. The things of eternity, in their awful grandeur, are brought near to you, as living realities; and the world and its gayest scenes are made to appear very empty things.

You are wondering who this stranger can be, when all at once your eyes are opened, and you see that you are in the presence of the Man of Sorrows—your own Saviour. As he did with Thomas, he shows you his hands and his side, and bids you read there the evidences of his love. He fixes upon you that look that melted Peter's heart, and those eyes that swam in tears of anguish for you, and asks if you love him? You fall at his feet, exclaiming, "Blessed Saviour, I do love thee; oh, help me to love thee more!"

Suppose, then, that he asks you, as an evidence of your love to him, that you go to those who are destitute of the means of grace, and tell them the story of his love, and urge them in his stead to be reconciled to God. You plead, like Moses, your want of eloquence, and your inability to go, under the circumstances in which you are placed. He then asks you, if not able to go yourself, that you will contribute of your worldly means to send others, who are able and willing to go? Now, could you,

in his presence, who agonized upon the cross for you, and who is to put the crown of glory upon your head, refuse this most reasonable request?

Now, though Jesus is not thus personally visiting us at our homes and appealing to our hearts; he is really doing so through the various organizations which he has instituted for proclaiming his truth abroad. From his throne in the heavens he says, "Support them, and I will account it as done to myself." Standing upon the Mount of Olives, in view of the scenes of his retirement, and devotion, and tragic sufferings, his farewell command was, "Go, preach the gospel to every creature." This is binding upon every Christian. We must either go or send. We live in an age of peculiar promise to the human family; and in our own country, new and vast fields of exertion invite the energies of the people of God. Forms of error, with a zeal that rebukes us, are entering these fields. Infidelity in some of its most loathsome and dangerous forms, is uttering its blasphe-

mies against the Holy One; while the religion of mere form and ceremony plants itself everywhere to block up the pathway of true, vital godliness. Between these enemies of God, coming from opposite directions, and with opposing watchwords, we are called to take our stand and present Christ's blessed Gospel. It is ours to unfurl the banner that has been dipped in the blood shed for the ransom of a world, and go forth to the holy conflict with an unwavering faith.

It is amazing the amount of good that can be done by personal effort, if the heart is only truly alive to the work. Two pious young men had a considerable distance to walk in order to reach their place of worship. They accordingly agreed to invite persons as they went along, to go to the house of God with them. In this course they persevered, till they could count up no less than twenty, ten of whom were converted and became members of the church. Another young man gathered together by his own exertions a class of

twelve boys whom he instructed in the truths of the Bible, on the Sabbath. He went on in spite of all discouragements, making each member of his class a subject of prayer, till every one of them was brought to Christ. Two of them are ministers of the Gospel, and several of them are teachers of the young. The great thing is to be always active in the Master's service, and watching for opportunities of doing good. Some are ready to avail themselves of what promises to be some great occasion of usefulness; but the little occasions that are occurring every hour of the day, they allow to pass by unnoticed. But if we are working away for Jesus, from the motive of love, no matter how small our sphere, we shall be approved as well as the missionary who influences the destiny of a nation, or the martyr who honors the truth at the stake. It has been said that it is a great deal easier to die *once* for Christ than to live *always* for Him. And it is easier to do some great act that will attract the attention of the world, than to go on

patiently plodding through the daily duties that fall in our way every hour.

Many souls can be reached by personal conversation, that the public preaching of the word fails to move. A gentleman one day went into a store to do some business, and found the clerk alone. He was a moral man and a regular attendant upon the means of grace. The gentleman asked if he felt any anxiety about the salvation of his soul. "I cannot say that I do," was the reply. "You believe that, as a sinner, you cannot be saved in any way but through faith in Christ?" "Yes, I believe it, but I do not feel it." "Then you acknowledge that you are exposed to die and be lost at any moment?" "Yes, I know that it is so." "Now then," said the gentlemen, "you know your duty to repent of sin and believe in Christ; will you begin this moment to do your duty as far as you know how?" "I will," he replied. In a few days that young man was a happy Christian. How many professing Christians would have let that opportunity of

doing good pass, and through such neglect that soul might have been lost.

I would seek deeply to impress upon the mind of the young convert the importance of cultivating great skill and wisdom in speaking to sinners about their souls. Great injury may be done by a rash and imprudent mode of approach. There is such a thing as being *wise to win souls*. There is a certain skill and tact which some possess that we should seek to imitate. Let the following fact help to illustrate this. A very wicked, passionate man, became neighbor to a devoted minister of the Gospel. He began a career of sin, and declared his purpose to insult the minister if he should attempt to speak to him. In a little time after the hardened man was taken down by a severe sickness, and the minister resolved to go and see him.

"If you do he will insult you," said the friend who had informed him of the man's sickness.

"I will see him, nevertheless, and look to God for guidance and blessing," replied the minister.

Accordingly he called and inquired of the sick man about his health. He received very curt, and almost uncivil replies. But without saying one word of his own on religion, he opened his Bible and said, "If you please I will read to you." He read the fifteenth chapter of Luke, offered a short prayer, and left.

Next day he again called, read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, again prayed, and left as before without saying a word of his own. This course he continued for some time, till one day the hardened sinner broke completely down, grasped the minister's hand, wept, confessed himself a sinner, and said he was a wonder to himself.

"It is God," replied the minister ; "I have not spoken a word. God has spoken. He has done this."

"Yes," said the man, "I see it now. If you had spoken a single word of your own to me when first you came, or for some time after, I would not have borne it. Weak as I was, I should have tried to

turn you out of my house. I was astonished at your daring to come to me. You took me by surprise. I could not be angry when you asked in such a kind way after my health. You read me those beautiful words. I knew they were not your own words, but God's own words, and I was silent. You shut the book, and I thought you would begin to reproach me and tell me what a sinful wretch I was, and then would be my time to speak; but I looked up and saw you on your knees, and heard you praying for me, and then, without another word, you were gone."

We have here a proof of great tact and good judgment—a union of zeal and knowledge that is beautiful to look upon, and worthy of imitation. When a sinner is angry or excited by intoxicating liquor, or in the presence of his wicked companions, it will often do more harm than good, to speak to him about religion, or rebuke him for his sins. So, to enter into discussion with him on some matter of controversy is improper. By getting the sinner alone,

speaking to him in love, pressing the truth solemnly upon his conscience, and speaking briefly, you may expect the Holy Spirit to bless your efforts. And O, what a matter of eternal joy to win one soul to Jesus!

In conversing with inquiring souls, much prudence is required. Great care should be taken that the mind may not be diverted from the necessity of an immediate trust in Christ. When the mind is in an awakened state, it is ready to seek comfort any where but in the right place, in anything but in Jesus. I have somewhere read of a young lady who was made to feel that she was a lost sinner. She was in an agony of mind, and could find no relief. She had a pious brother who was from home at the time, and she began to indulge the feeling that she must wait till he came home, and that he would help her to come to Jesus.

When the brother came home, he was informed of the state of things, and he made up his mind to go to his own room without seeing her; but as he passed the door of her room, she sprang out and drew him back, crying out:

“O, brother, save me! save me! If you don't I shall die!”

The brother reflected a moment, and then pushing her away almost roughly, and yet with a voice trembling with affection, said:

“And so you will come to *me* rather than to Jesus! *I* can do nothing at all for you.”

And thus left to herself—her false refuge torn away, she felt that all her trouble had been because she was unwilling to come to Christ, and in a short time she surrendered to Him, and was at peace.

“Sow ye beside all waters
Where the dew of Heaven may fall;
Ye shall reap if ye be not weary,
For the Spirit breathes o'er all.
Sow, though the thorns may wound thee;
One wore the thorns for thee;
And though the cold world scorn thee,
Patient and hopeful be.
Sow ye beside all waters,
With a blessing and a prayer,
Name him whose hand upholds us,
And sow thou every where.”

IX.

FOES TO GRACE.

EVERY thing good in this world of sin and depravity has foes to encounter, that aim at its destruction. This is especially true of grace in the heart. It did not grow up there naturally, of itself, but had to be planted by the Divine hand, and the same power that put it there must keep it there; the same agency that gave spiritual life must sustain that life. Nevertheless, we must be co-workers with God in this work. We must *watch* as well as pray against the approach of every spiritual foe. We must

not pray against temptation, and then run into it; we must not ask for spiritual health, and then swallow poison. Whatever we find to be an enemy to the work of God in our souls, we must be ready to sacrifice, though dear to us as a right hand or a right eye.

Now, one thing that tends greatly to destroy the life of God in the souls of many young converts is the rage for amusements that abounds in the present day. Unconverted men are called "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." This is the object for which they live, the paltry, selfish purpose to which they give up their whole being. This is to be expected from them, and we do not wonder at it. But when those who profess to be dead with Christ to the world, and to have risen with him into a new life, join with the world in their amusements, till both get blended together, and the distinction between the world and the church is nearly lost, then is there ground, not merely for astonishment, but for the deepest alarm.

Permit me to say that I am no enemy to recreations and innocent amusements. The mind of man is not made to be ever upon the stretch. We have as a nation too few holidays, and we should unbend oftener than we do, amid the beauties of nature, and the pleasures of congenial social intercourse. There is a time to laugh as well as a time to weep. It has been said that Jesus wept but never laughed. This I do not believe. He was not only God but man also, and it is a part of man's nature to laugh as well as to weep. It is true that we have no account of his laughing, and neither have we of many other things that doubtless he did, as man. To laugh is not sinful unless it is at sin we are laughing. The religion of superstition is always gloomy, but the religion of Christ is cheerful, and fills the soul with gladness. Still, all this is no plea for Christians indulging in worldly and sinful amusements. Our religion is to regulate our recreations as well as every thing else.

There are few things that tends to

hurt the spirituality of Christians in the present day more than those religious *festivals* and *fairs*, gotten up for the purpose of supporting some religious and benevolent object. The object to be accomplished is so good, the motive of many of those who take part in them is so good, that men get blinded to the many great evils connected with them. These evils are allowed under a religious name, and under religious sanctions, so that conscience is confused and seduced, and ceases rightly to perform its functions; and the young Christian is betrayed into calling evil good. In former times if a church wanted to build a place of worship, or pay off a debt upon one already built, they put their hands in their pockets and paid it. If voluntary aid could be obtained from the world, good and well; but they never thought of getting up an entertainment that would please the ungodly, and compromise the dignity of truth, for the paltry purpose of getting a little money from the hands of the wicked. O, no; they would have worshipped God in a

barn, or in a log school house, all their days, rather than have done so !

To see God's professed people, respectable matrons, old men, church officers, and young Christians, get up tableaux and theatrical performances, and dress themselves up in some fantastic style for the purpose of amusing a gaping crowd,—is most mortifying and distressing to sober, thoughtful Christians. And then I am told, that sometimes the whole ends with a *raffle*, which every body knows is a species of gambling. O, it was a sad sight to see the wicked gambling for our Lord's garments at the foot of the cross, but it is still sadder to see professed Christians encouraging the same evil, in the name of our holy religion. "My soul come not thou into their secret; my honor with them be not thou united!"

The spirituality of individuals and churches is very much injured, in our cities and large towns, by those fashionable parties that have come so much into vogue of late. These parties are often upon a

scale of great extravagance and expense, quite inconsistent with the simplicity of Christ; and this evil increases as a rivalry gets up among the members of the church, as to who will give the finest entertainment. The whole winter passes off in a round of these assemblages, so that Christians will be called to attend two or three of them in a week. The entertainment is kept up to a very late hour, so that family worship is neglected in most of the homes of those who attend them, and it is to be feared *closet* worship too. A winter spent in this kind of dissipation is sure to injure the devotional spirit, and to break up those fixed habits of godliness which all professors should form and preserve. Of course I do not utter one word against social enjoyment with the good. We are made social beings, and many of the purest enjoyments of our lives spring from this source. Religion, instead of repressing this part of our nature, directs and elevates, and refines it. But when our social feelings are indulged at the expense of the

health of the soul, we may be sure that they have been carried too far.

One evil leads to another, and I have been told that often these parties end with dancing. Dancing in Christian homes and by Christian people! If you were struck suddenly with a fatal disease and eternal realities were to burst upon you as only a death-bed can reveal them, would you send for one of the *dancing Christians* to pray for you? Or would an awakened soul go to one of them with the question of questions, "What shall I do to be saved?" Dancing begun at these parties leads to the ball-room, the ball-room leads to the theatre, that to the bar-room, and the whole to perdition. Take the following incident from the experience of a pastor:

"A most interesting work of grace occurred in a Presbyterian church in this city. Many anxiously inquired what they should do to be saved. Among this number was a young lady who listened to the voice of truth, and was troubled. Conscience spoke, and she felt the claims of

God on her; but she could not now attend to the matters of her soul's salvation. On one evening the meeting was more than usually interesting and solemn; the next evening a ball was to be held, and from this scene of solemnity she hurries away, and joins in the giddy dance. By the sound of the violin and the voice of melody she aims to drown the admonitions of conscience; and for a little time she succeeded. Amid the display of fashion, the glare of lights, and the intoxication of the scene, conscience slumbered, and suffered the gay transgressor to revel undisturbed in forbidden pleasure. But again she felt herself a sinner, and again she is at the meeting for conversation and prayer. Her heart is the seat of many painful emotions. The claims of truth and duty are urged. She *would* yield—she *would* follow the Saviour, but the theatre, the ball-room, her gay companions, how can she crucify these? Unfortunately she was solicited to attend another ball. She went. Satan, as an angel of light, shed a deceptive radiance

over the scene; she tried to be happy—tried to believe that her seriousness was melancholy, and that she had yet plenty of time to prepare for eternity. She returned to her dwelling; but she returned to die—to die without hope. “I did not think,” said she, “that I should have to die so soon.” One evening at the inquiry meeting; the next at the ball-room—gayest among the gay; a few nights more, and she is in her coffin. One week, with a heart light as air, she goes to a store to purchase trimmings for a ball-dress; on the next week her friends go to the same store to purchase her shroud.”

I believe it was the Rev. Richard Cecil, who, when travelling in a stage-coach, heard a young lady talking to her companion about an anticipated ball. “O!” said she, “I do enjoy a ball so; I enjoy the thought of its coming on; I enjoy the pleasure while it lasts; and I like to think of it after it is over.” “I think, madam,” said Mr. Cecil, “there is a fourth pleasure that you have forgotten to mention.”

“Indeed, sir, I don’t remember it; what do you refer to?” “The pleasure it will afford you, madam, when you come to die.” The remark was an arrow sent by the Spirit of God, and led to her conversion.

Just as Satan quoted Scripture even to our Lord, so do men quote the Bible to defend dancing. David dancing before the Lord, as an expression of his joy when the ark of God was restored; and Miriam dancing at the wonderful national deliverance at the Red Sea, are often referred to. That was the mode in which the people of the East expressed their joy, just as rending their garments, or throwing dust and ashes upon their heads, was their mode of expressing sorrow. We have no instance of promiscuous dancing; whenever mentioned, the sexes are separate. This was the case with Miriam, and also in other places, when referred to. But to make these cases an excuse for the promiscuous intermingling of the sexes, the indecent polkas and waltzes of modern times, the shame-

less exposure of person, the late hours, and all the many evils that attend the ball-room, is an insult to the sacred Scriptures, and an outrage upon common sense. It is seeking to make the source of all truth and goodness responsible for error and wrong.

And what shall we say of professing Christians going to the theatre, the circus, and such like places of resort? The best that can be said of the theatre is, that it is a place of vain amusement. Now, recreation and amusement are sometimes necessary ; and doubtless there are amusements in which good people can engage with the strictest propriety, and with advantage to themselves, both physically and intellectually. But the theatre is not one of them. It has been well said, "Amusements must be blameless, as well as ingenious ; safe, as well as rational ; moral, as well as intellectual. Whatever pleasantry of idea, whatever gaiety of sentiment, whatever airiness of expression, should we not jealously watch against any unsoundness in the general principle, and mischief in the pre-

vailing tendency?" Tried by such a test the theatre is a place utterly unfit for good people to visit. It inculcates false principles of action and false views of life; it deadens all the finer feelings of our nature, by making wounds, shrieks, groans, murders, assassinations, the subject of a pleasing excitement; and in short, many of its most popular exhibitions are grossly immoral.

Theatres show what their direct tendencies are by gathering around them the worst houses and the worst characters in a community. The lowest drinking houses, gambling hells, and places of public infamy gather as if by attraction around the theatre. There are to be found attracted the swindler, the gambler, the black leg, the coarse, the vulgar, the blood-thirsty—vile men and shameless women. The Common Council of Boston at one time prohibited liquor from being sold on the premises of the Tremont Theatre, and the trustees publicly protested against the order, on the ground that it was impossible to support

the theatre without it. Are these the kind of places that Christians should patronize? The ancients tell a story of a holy monk who bitterly reproached the devil for stealing a young man who was found at the theatre, when Satan replied, "I found him on my premises, and took him."

The theatre has, it is true, been called a school of morals; but it is easy to give the finest names to the vilest things. On this point the Rev. Dr. Thompson, of New York, says: "If the theatre is a place of wholesome moral influence—a school of virtue, as it is sometimes called—then it is proper for me as a Christian minister to frequent it, and to urge my church to do so likewise. But this would be considered quite out of character by the mass of playgoers. And why? Not merely because of my profession, but because the theatre is known to be an unfit place for any serious-minded man. Some years ago, a clergyman residing in the vicinity of Boston, visited a theatre in that city in order to study the elocution of a distinguished

actor. To avoid being recognized, lest his example should do injury, he took his seat in the pit with his hat drawn over his brow. But a wag near by soon discovered who he was, and when next the curtain dropped, peering under the discomfited clerygman's hat, he pronounced his name aloud with an oath and an exclamation of surprise, and then added with mock gravity—'Let us pray.' The effect was highly ludicrous. The audience was convulsed with laughter. But why so ludicrous? Is prayer a ludicrous thing? Is it ludicrous for a sinful, dependent creature to offer supplication to his Maker? No; there is a great deal of solemn appealing to heaven even on the stage. Aside from the manner, it was the felt incongruity of the thing that provoked a laugh. The thought of prayer in such a place, the presence of a Christian minister, or of any man making pretensions to piety, amid such scenes, amused that pleasure-loving audience. That laugh disclosed the character of the place, and the object of their

assembling. Prayer in a theatre would be the richest farce."

We may rest assured that where there is a taste, a craving after the excitement of worldly amusements, there is a very low state of religion in the soul, if there is any religion at all. The soul that lives near God has a fullness of joy and peace the most satisfying. The soul that drinks of the river of life, will not stoop to drink of the filthy puddles of sin. The heart in which Christ dwells has no room for his enemies.

" 'Tis not for man to trifle! Life is brief,
And sin is here.
Our age is but the falling of a leaf,
A dropping tear.
We have no time to sport away the hours,
All must be earnest in a world like ours."

X

HELPS AND HINDRANCES.

MY DEAR reader, in your journey heavenward, your highest interests require that you should avail yourself of all the *helps* you can; having your mind deeply impressed with your personal responsibility to God. A young Christian made this entry in his diary: "Resolved that I will, the Lord being my helper, think, speak, and act as an *individual*; for as such I must live, as such I must die, stand before God, and be damned or saved forever and ever. I have been waiting for others; I must act as if I were the only one to act, and wait no longer."

That is just what is wanted; not to be comparing ourselves with others, with the members and office bearers of the church, and setting them up as our standard, but each aiming at eminent personal piety for ourselves. Each must work for God every day, as if there was not another worker in the world. One who knew Harlan Page well, says, "I have well considered the assertion when I say, that during nine years, in which we were associated in labors, I do not know that I ever passed an interview with him long enough to have any interchange of thought and feeling, in which I did not receive from him an impulse heaven-ward—an impulse onward in duty to God and the souls of men." He did not wait for the church all to go to work, before he would do any thing; but did his own work that lay around, as in God's awful sight.

It will be a great help to have special seasons set apart for the study of the Bible, accompanied with much earnest prayer for the sanctifying influences of the Holy

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Spirit. The opinion of the world, the standard of piety in the church, the attainments of deacons and ministers in personal religion, are not what we are to look at, but the rules that God lays down in the Scriptures. The word of God fixes a very high standard of spirituality, and tells us that to be spiritually-minded is life and peace. Nothing should be allowed to interfere with our hours of private devotion. It is the habit of some Christians to take, in the morning, a short portion of Scripture to meditate upon during the day; and amid the pauses of business, or as they have opportunity, their minds recur to it. This is an excellent plan. It brings the soul into direct contact with God,—with his thoughts and his words.

And we should read such good books as we find have a reviving and spiritual influence upon our minds. A good book is like a good companion; it helps us on in our heavenly journey. I can never forget the happy influence exerted upon my mind when first I read Baxter's "Saint's Rest."

A good book is a quiet, silent friend. It lies there unobtrusively, waiting patiently till we are ready to take it up, and then gives us the glowing thoughts of one who may now be rejoicing among the angels in heaven. Eternity alone can declare the good that has been done by the press when consecrated to God. It is impossible to read such books as Jay's "Exercises," Taylor's "Holy Living," Owen on "Spiritual-Mindedness," Cecil's "Remains," and Nevins's "Practical Thoughts," without feeling that they draw us nearer to God and heaven. The memoirs of good people, such as Martyn, Payson, Brainerd, McCheyne, Isabella Graham, Dr. Judson, Carey, and Mary Lundie Duncan, are very refreshing to the soul. We catch to some extent their spirit, share with them in their joys and sorrows, and learn to follow them as they followed Christ. While there are many very bad books, so bad that they seem as if they had been scooped up out of the pit of perdition, let us thank God that there are books that in tens of thousands or

dwelling are speaking for God with a voice that never tires.

Do not neglect to pray for the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. If you are to have solemn, heavenly, elevating thoughts, the Spirit must impart them. If you are to loathe sin, pant and thirst after God, and long intensely after holiness of heart, the Spirit must implant these feelings in your soul. Every glimmer of holy light, every spark of celestial fire that comes into our darkness and coldness, comes from this Divine Agent. Let it be your earnest, constant prayer, that you may have His presence with you always. In the burning words of Dr. Harris, be urged to this: "O, Christians, is there such a doctrine in our creed as the doctrine of Divine influence? Is there such an Agent in the church as the Almighty Spirit of God? Is he among us expressly to testify of Christ—to be the great animating spirit of his missionary church? And is it true that his unlimited aid can be obtained by prayer—that we can be baptized with the Holy Ghost, and

with fire? O, ye that preach, 'believe the promise of the Spirit, and be saved.' Ye that love the Lord, keep not silence; send up a loud, long, united, and unsparing entreaty for his promised aid. This is what we want. And this is all we want. Till this be obtained, all the angelic agency of heaven will avail us nothing; and when it is obtained, all that agency will be unequal to the celebration of our triumphs."

The young convert must endeavor to cultivate great tenderness of conscience. Paul said, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man." Young converts generally have a tender conscience. It may not be as well enlightened as it should be, but it is sensitive and quick to speak for God. But if it is trifled with, the whole soul will soon feel the shock. If its voice is frequently stifled, and its admonitions neglected, the soul will soon walk in darkness. If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. It is a dreadful

thing to sin so that a man's own conscience becomes his bitterest enemy. A pastor being called to see a dying man, received from his lips the following account of himself: "Twenty years ago I was a member of a church in W. I was tempted, and quickly yielded to the poisonous cup. I became intoxicated, was called to trial, refused to make a proper acknowledgment, and I suppose my name was stricken from the book. But God's eye has watched me ever since in all my crooked ways. I see how reluctant he has been to let me go. He has brought me in a way that I knew not, and he has never given me up. O, he has been so good, so merciful, so kind, so long-suffering to me!"

"But," said the pastor, "how do you feel when you think how you have treated him?"

"O," said he, in tones of deepest anguish, "that's what hurts me; that's what hurts me."

Yes, the stings of a rebuking conscience are hard to bear, but it is a still more

dreadful thing to have a conscience that has ceased to rebuke. A good conscience is one that speaks loud enough to be heard; that speaks truth when it is heard; that speaks in time to prevent the commission of evil; and that perseveres in speaking till it is obeyed. James Brainard Taylor says in his journal, that it is a *bad sign* when we find ourselves looking *back to past Christian* experience for evidence of piety. And the professor who does not keep a clear conscience is nearly always found so doing. How much better to keep a sweet, present consciousness of the Divine favor, like the man who when asked if he wished to recover or not, said, "Really, my friend, I do not care which. If I die, I shall be with God; if I live, God will be with me."

We come now to speak of some *hindrances* that lie in the pathway to glory; with which this little volume shall close.

Uniting in marriage with one who is not a professor of religion, is a great hindrance. There is no earthly relation so tender, so

intimate, as that of husband and wife. If there be a radical difference of tastes and inclinations between them; if one has an indifference, or it may be an aversion, to what the other regards of supreme importance, there is a sad drawback upon the happiness of both. Especially when the subject of religion, the greatest and most important that can engage the human mind, is the subject of difference, to get along at all there will be a resort to compromises, and these in religion are always dangerous. We have enough of hindrances to encounter from our own hearts, from the world, from the circumstances in which we are often placed, without deliberately choosing a life-long hindrance in our bosom companion.

Suppose a devotedly pious young lady is united to a man who is not a Christian. He may not persecute her for following out her religious convictions, though that is often done, but he will have no sympathy with her in those things that are dearest to her heart. He will look coldly upon her

religious feelings and observances. Perhaps he will even sneer at them ; at first, it may be, by way of joke, but afterwards in bitter earnest. To get him to go with her to church, she is tempted to promise to go with him to places that her conscience does not approve, and thus a great wrong is done to her moral nature. No family prayer, no spiritual conversation, no co-operation from him she loves in her religious enterprises, and no good Scriptural hope of spending an eternity with him in heaven ;—it is easy to see what a sad drawback upon religious progress all this will be. It is true she may be the means of her husband's conversion, but alas ! it is still oftener the case that he becomes the cause of her apostacy. Every pastor is familiar with the gradual steps of declension. Her class at the Sabbath School is given up. She is found missing at the prayer-meeting. She attends but once on the Lord's day, and often not even that. Her duties as a tract-distributor are given up ; and, in short, her connection with the

church becomes a mere matter of form. When spoken to upon the subject her ready excuse is, "You know that my husband is not a professor of religion, and I cannot do as I would wish."

And when it is a pious husband that is joined to an unconverted wife, the influence upon him is equally bad. The power of woman's influence is a favorite topic with the orator, and too much can scarcely be said upon it; but is a power for evil as well as for good, according as it is exerted. A good woman is a crown of glory to her husband, and will prove a blessing to him, both for time and eternity; but many a promising young man has been utterly ruined by uniting himself to an unconverted companion, who by her gay, thoughtless, giddy, and extravagant conduct, has blasted his prospects for both worlds. If children are given them, the influence of the mother upon them is disastrous. In short, the result is often that the husband yields point after point to the opposition of his wife till there is little left

of his religion but the name, if even that is not gone. What better could we expect from the wilful violation of God's rule, "Be not unequally joined together with unbelievers," and, "Marry only in the Lord."

Another great hindrance to the progress of spiritual religion in the soul, is a strong absorption in the excitements of party politics. Of course, when a man becomes a Christian he does not cease to be a citizen, and when we take up our duties in the church, we are not absolved from those in the world. True religion is the friend of human liberty, and it would not be right for good people to give over national affairs into the hands of the ungodly. The Christian is as responsible for the proper use of his vote, as for any other talent, and should carry his religion into the arena of politics, as well as into his business.

But while all this is true, it is no excuse for a Christian man going into all the squabbling, wire-pulling, and absolute chicanery and falsehood of political parties.

He cannot attend these meetings night after night, perhaps to the entire neglect of his religious privileges, and hear stump orators rave, and swear, and misquote, and sometimes ridicule the word of God, without great injury to his spiritual nature. In proportion as he allows himself to be drawn into the whirlpool of excitement, he will feel more and more disposed to neglect his Bible and his closet, and even the house of God will seem a dull place after the wild excitement of the political gathering. It is no excuse to say that we are acting on the right side ; for a right thing may be done in a wrong way. We should put our religion into our politics, and not our politics into our religion. The frequency with which our elections occur makes the danger from this source the greater.

The last hindrance I would mention, is becoming too much engaged in our lawful worldly business. There is more danger from this source, because it is proper to be diligent in business, and it is difficult for us to discover the boundary line between

duty to ourselves and our families, and the indulgence of worldly-mindedness and covetousness. We know, however, that prosperity has a tendency to harden the heart, and that the attainment of wealth here has made many poor forever. When Garrick was showing Dr. Johnson round his new house and estate, and through his splendid drawing-rooms, he said, "Ah! David, these are the things that make death-beds terrible." Alas! how many professing Christians I have seen make their business their idol, give their days and their nights up to it, till it seemed as if they had not a thought for any thing else! The fruit such reap is misery.

We are told that a young person once expressed to Dr. Franklin his surprise, that the possession of great riches should so often be accompanied with anxiety and unhappiness; and referred to the case of a rich merchant, who did not seem nearly so happy as some of his own clerks. The doctor took an apple from a fruit basket, and gave it to a child in the room, who

could scarcely grasp it in his little hand. He then gave it a second, which filled the other hand, and then choosing a third, of great size and beauty, he presented that also. The child tried to hold the three apples, but failed, and dropping the last on the floor, burst into tears. "See," said Franklin, "there is a little man in the world with more riches than he can enjoy."

Some time ago, two gentlemen stepped into the same compartment of a railway train, just as it was starting from Greenwich to London, England. One was a minister of the gospel, the other a rich merchant of high standing in the metropolis. The merchant held in his hand a circular which he was reading with great uneasiness, and at last he exclaimed, "Well, that is enough to drive any one mad!" The minister looked at him kindly and said, "I trust, sir, nothing serious has occurred to disturb you." "Serious enough, I assure you," was the reply; and he handed him the paper he had been

reading. The minister saw that it was a printed list of the prices of stock, for that day, in the London market. Supposing that he had lost by some stock-jobbing speculation, he handed the paper back to the merchant, remarking that those who meddled with such matters must expect to suffer losses sometimes. "Oh," said he, "you are mistaken. I have suffered no loss. But the truth is I purchased, some time ago, at sixteen. I sold a few days ago at forty-three, and now I find from that circular that I might have got forty-six! That's the thing that vexes me so much."

The minister spoke to him affectionately and earnestly about his soul, and upon asking him if he attended any place of worship, he frankly replied, "I go to church as regularly as I go to London Exchange; but I can't say that I get much good, for the world rushes on me like a flowing tide, and my mind becomes distracted with thoughts about this and thoughts about that, so that the best ser-

mons are, in a great measure, thrown away on me. I have been very much prospered, but the mischief is, the more I make, the more miserable, somehow, I become. Why, sir, in business—business—*business*, is the only essence of my existence. It seems absolutely necessary to my life, and yet, alas! strange to say, it is proving the only bane of it. I am becoming its veriest drudge, and its most abject slave, and how I am to rid myself of it is more than I can tell.” Poor man! while he thus poured out his feelings he became very much affected, and wept very bitterly.

As my pastoral duties have lain mostly in cities, I have seen a great deal of this kind of thing;—men killing themselves by inches, body and soul, in the service of mammon. Of course this is done under some pious pretence, such as wanting only to obtain a competence, to provide for their own households, and to obtain means to do good. But in almost every case of this extreme devotion to business, it is the love of gain that is the propelling motive. As

some one has aptly said, "Many men want wealth—not a competence alone, but a five-story competence; and religion they would like as a sort of lightning-rod to their houses, to ward off, by and by, the bolts of divine wrath."

This grasping spirit of avarice and speculation is like the morbid appetite of the drunkard, strengthened and increased by indulgence. All the warm, generous impulses of the soul become repressed and die out. The heart becomes contracted by selfishness. The eyes have nothing looking out of them but greedy cunning. A good bargain has far more attractions than a good action. The noble, generous, benevolent souls around us, that are blessing the world with deeds of love, are not those who are very rich. A wide heart and a wide estate seldom go together. Indeed, the man who does his duty to his God and to his fellow men can never be very rich. A man can only become very rich, either by defrauding *others*, or by defrauding *himself*. Many a man who, in his business

transactions, has been strictly honest to those with whom he has traded, has been dishonest to himself; and when he dies, it may be said of him, as Wesley said of one, "He died *wickedly rich*."

My reader, seek the true riches—be rich toward God. Your fields may be fruitful but your heart barren. Your shop may be prospering, but your soul bankrupt. You may have a hospitable home in which you entertain your friends in a princely style, while you shut the door of your heart in your Saviour's face. Oh seek the pearl of great price! Lay up treasure in heaven, where funds never depreciate, and where gold never changes its value. With your weary, worn, troubled heart, restless as the heaving, moaning sea, cling to Jesus for sweet repose. Weary of the world, with its wasting cares, and toils, and unsatisfying pleasures—weary of yourself, with your broken vows, and empty resolutions, and purposeless determinations, cling by faith to Him who has promised to give rest to your soul.

“ Jesus, while this rough desert-soil
I tread, be Thou my guide and stay;
Nerve me for conflict and for toil—
Uphold me on my stranger-way.

Jesus, in heaviness and fear,
‘Mid cloud, and shade, and gloom I stray;
For earth’s last night is drawing near—
Oh cheer me on my stranger way.

Jesus, in solitude and grief,
When sun and stars withhold their ray,
Make haste, make haste to my relief—
Oh light me on my stranger-way.

Jesus, in weakness of this flesh,
When Satan grasps me for his prey;
Oh give me victory afresh,
And speed me on my stranger-way.

Jesus, my righteousness and strength,
My more than life, my more than day;
Bring, bring deliverance at length—
Oh come and end my stranger-way.”

1846
The following is a list of the
names of the persons who
were present at the
meeting of the
Board of Directors
of the
City of New York
on the 1st day of
January, 1846.

The evening of the 1st of
April 1864 I received from
you a letter which I have
just read and which I find
very interesting. I am
glad to hear that you
are well and hope to hear
from you again soon.
I am, dear friend,
very truly yours,
Wm. Lloyd Garrison

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